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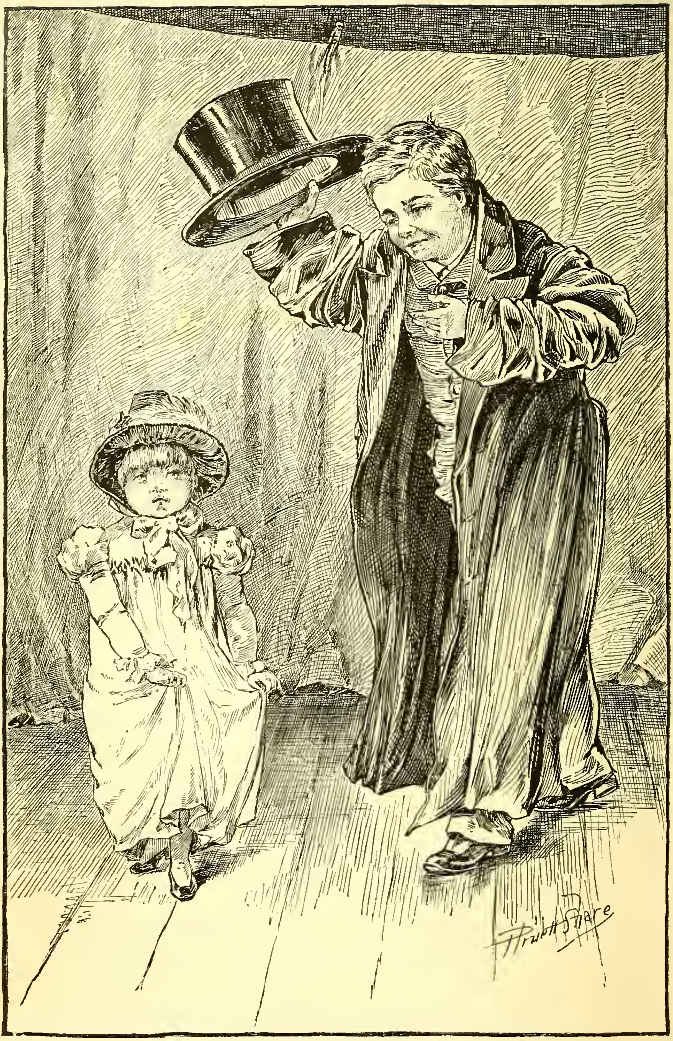

" Don took off his hat, and made a ceremonious bow to the floor, and Baby held up her long dress daintily, and made a cunning, bashful little courtesy." — PAGE 113.

63822

THE BROWNS.

832-64

BY

Smith, Mrs. Mary Prudence (Wells)

MARY P. W. SMITH,

AUTHOR OF "JOLLY GOOD TIMES; OR, CHILD-LIFE ON A FARM,"
"JOLLY GOOD TIMES AT SCHOOL,"
ETC.

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TO

MY PARENTS,

WITH LOVING GRATITUDE,

This Book

IS DEDICATED.

> "So long as one can say 'father' and 'mother' there is something to love on the earth which bears one in its arms; it is only when the parents are gone, that one is set down on the hard ground." — *On the Heights.*

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	DON DOES AN ERRAND	1
II.	IT SNOWS	11
III.	BORDER WARFARE	22
IV.	THE BOO	33
V.	DON FIGURES AS AN INVALID	42
VI.	THE FLOOD	51
VII.	NAN'S TRIALS	67
VIII.	PREPARATIONS	81
IX.	THE PARTY	96
X.	DON "SPEAKS IN PUBLIC ON THE STAGE"	105
XI.	THE ZOO	117
XII.	THE GRANDIN ROAD	135
XIII.	A DARK SHADOW	152
XIV.	THE REACTION	163
XV.	DON HAS HIS OWN WAY	177

CHAPTER PAGE

XVI. CELEBRATING A BIRTHDAY 191

XVII. THE BROWNS PREPARE TO TRAVEL 208

XVIII. THEY TRAVEL 220

XIX. THEY ENCOUNTER AN "ONLY" 229

XX. THEY GO ON 242

XXI. THEY ARRIVE 254

THE BROWNS.

CHAPTER I.

DON DOES AN ERRAND.

"OH dear!" said Don Brown, as he came in from school, and slammed his strap-full of books down on the sitting-room table, "I wish I had something to do. What can I do, mother?"

It was January, and no snow yet in Cincinnati. The days were dark and short, cold enough to make loitering about outdoors uncomfortable, but not cold enough to form ice. The boys were hard pressed for amusement. "Chalk the rabbit" and "Catcher" had long since lost all charm, and still it would n't snow. All the "areas of snow" and "local storms" predicted for the Ohio Valley went deliberately around Cincinnati, as if purposely to disappoint the boys.

Don's mother was a wise woman. The number of errands she planned for him about this time was something wonderful. So to-night she said, "I want you to do an errand for me."

"What is it?" asked Don, doubtfully.

There were errands and errands. It might be to take the coal-hod and a skillet or two down to the tinshop for repairs. He should not like that. It might be something involving a long trip in the horse-cars. That would be something like an errand.

"I want to send a note out to Mrs. Shirley, on Price's Hill."

"All right. Where is it?"

"Here it is, and your car-tickets. You are to wait for an answer."

"Yes'm," said Don, already half-way out the door.

"Wear your overcoat, and take your muffler. It's growing very cold."

"Yes'm," from the head of the hall stairs.

"Go right out and back, Don. Don't loiter."

No answer this time. Don, in his hurry to be off, was clattering so noisily downstairs, it is doubtful if he heard these last words.

Don liked nothing better than an errand to Price's Hill.

He hailed an Eighth Street car, and went on the front platform with the driver. It was rather cold there to-night, but Don liked to see the horses. Besides, riding on the platform was a manly privilege, marking the difference between big and little boys.

The horses trotted briskly along, the rows of brick houses glided swiftly by, and soon they came out the western end of the city, and passed under the long, high Southern Railroad bridge. To Don's delight, a long freight train was going over. One of the car horses was frightened, and pranced and reared beautifully; but the driver twitched and lashed him so hard, by way of quieting his nerves, that the poor horse was glad to buckle down to work again, and went faster than ever.

From under the bridge, they came out on the high embankment, over which the street railroad crosses Mill Creek Valley, a low, wet, thinly settled tract of country. The horses went fast, knowing well they were nearing their stable; and the cold wind rushing across this desolate open space whistled so cuttingly around Don's ears, that he thought as he turned up his coat collar, "I wish I'd brought my muffler."

He was half-tempted to go inside, but that would look to the driver, who had advised him to go in some time before, like backing out. Besides, he wanted to see what the frisky horse would do when they crossed the Marietta Railroad track, where an engine was running up and down, with much puffing and blowing off of steam.

The driver slapped first one hand, then the other, across his breast. Don thought of offering to drive for him, but the poor fellow looked so cold and cross he did not venture. Moreover, Don's ears were now so cold, his hands were fully occupied in trying to protect them.

At the foot of Price's Hill, Don took what he called "the elevator." Cincinnati lies in a valley, shut in to the Ohio River by a semi-circle of high hills, — hills so steep that several inclined planes are used to carry people quickly up them to the beautiful suburbs that lie all about the city. Price's Hill has two elevators, one being for horses and vehicles.

The inclined planes have double tracks running up the hill at an angle fearful to contemplate. There are two cars. A steam engine at the top draws one up as the other descends. The engineer stands at the top, with his hand on the brake. Two ropes are attached to each car. Nervous people comfort each other as they ascend, by saying how very safe it all is; how, if one rope breaks, the other is sure to hold, and so on.

Don delighted in the inclined planes. He would have liked an errand up one every night, when he had no pressing business of his own on hand. So he went gayly aboard the queer little car "Highland Mary," took his favorite place by the end window, and waited impatiently until all the bell-ringing and signalling from bottom to top was over, and the car started. Up, up, it sped, as if flying through the air, until the whole city lay spread out beneath him. Half-way up, the down-going car passed them in a flash, so quickly Don could not see whether it held any passengers or not.

This upward flight lasted only one short minute, and Don was at the top of the hill. Quite a long walk lay before him yet. He went down one hill, up another, took a cross-cut through Mrs. Shirley's orchard, and came out on top of a high hill, where stood Mrs. Shirley's house, commanding a wide view of Cincinnati, the Ohio River, the Kentucky hills and meadows, — a lovely spot in summer.

Mrs. Shirley was the kindest of ladies.

"You must be nearly frozen this cold night. Come right in to the fire, and let me get you some cake."

Don, by a great effort of politeness, at first went through the empty form of refusing the cake. But it was nearing his dinner hour; he was, to use his own expression, "hungry as a bear," and Mrs. Shirley, as he well knew, always had such particularly nice cake; so finally he was persuaded to take two large pieces.

"I suppose, like all boys, you enjoy the inclined plane?"

Don assented with a bashful smile, his mouth being full of cake.

"Horses like it, too. They appreciate, as well as any of us, the work it saves them. Coming home from the city, when we reach the road to the inclined plane my old Dick always tries hard to go that way. If we take the other road, Dick's spirits flag at once; he hangs his head, and we can hardly force him out of a walk. He knows he has to pull us all up that long hill. But if, without touching the reins, I say, "Inclined plane, Dick!" up goes his head, and away he trots briskly towards it in high spirits. It is funny to see him ride up at his ease, looking so serene and satisfied, turning his head this way and that to view the landscape. But I must answer your mother's note. Do have another piece of cake, Don; I know you must be hungry after your walk this cold night."

Don took another piece.

It was already dark when Don reached the top of the inclined plane, and he meant to hurry home. But some one hailed him.

"Hullo, Don!"

"Hullo, Jim! What are you doing up here?"

"Oh, nothing in particular. Just loafing Come out on the esplanade."

"Can't. I — eh —"

Don did not like to say his mother wanted him to hasten home. Jim might laugh at him.

"Oh, nonsense. Come along! I want to tell you something."

The esplanade is a broad platform, overhanging the brow of the hill, its edge guarded by a strong parapet. Over this the boys leaned, watching the cars gliding up and down the inclined plane, as if by magic; the street-car lights crawling spider-like to and fro, far down on Eighth Street; the long lines of lamps along the distant city streets; the bright lights on the river that marked the course of ferry-boats and steam-tugs, or showed where fleets of coal barges were moored along shore. A train of sleeping cars came around the curve below, and swept majestically up the valley.

"See that train down there?" asked Jim. "That's the New York Express. Don't you wish we were aboard? I tell you what, Don, I've about made up my mind to light out,—run away, you know. Going to school is played out. I want to be a newsboy on a train. Some fun in that. If father won't let me, I shall just run away. After I get started, I'll get a place for you."

Don was rather favorably struck with this idea. He, too, was tired of school, and felt the charm of life on a railroad train. As a little boy, he had always insisted he would be an engineer when a man. He said, "It would be capital fun. But I 'm nearly frozen," rubbing his ears. "Let 's go down, and we can talk over our plans going home."

It was nearly seven when he reached home. Through the half-open parlor shutters he had a glimpse of the family inside, sitting around the brightly blazing fire, which sent rosy lights and shadows dancing all over the room. Celia was playing the piano. Tired father, in dressing-gown and slippers, leaned back in an easy-chair, enjoying the music, and smiling at Nan and a pretty yellow-haired little one, who were dancing gayly to the strains of Celia's waltz. Mother looked anxious, and started up to peer out the window.

It seemed cosey and inviting within to the cold and hungry Don, peeping, an outsider, into his pleasant home; and somehow he did not feel half so anxious to run away from it as while listening to Jim's glowing pictures of the delightful adventures they would have while seeking their fortunes out in the wide world.

Dinner was over long ago, but some was kept warm for Don, who ate it with relish, notwithstanding the cake.

"I was afraid something had happened to you," said his mother. "What did make you so late?"

"Mrs. Shirley kept me a good while, writing her letter, and then I stopped a minute to look off the esplanade."

"Don! This cold night! I wonder you did n't freeze."

"I believe I did freeze this ear. It feels so queer. It 's beginning to ache, awfully."

Don's father was a doctor, luckily, as so many things happened to Don, first and last: a small fortune would otherwise have been required to pay surgeons and physicians.

Dr. Brown, being called out of the parlor, pronounced Don's ear badly frost-bitten. He was taken into a cold room, and the usual remedies applied, but suffered so much pain that he derived little comfort from escaping his studies that evening.

CHAPTER II.

IT SNOWS.

IT was a cloudy afternoon, so chilly and disagreeable that the Browns' sitting-room seemed all the pleasanter contrasted with the gloomy outer world. Celia was writing a French exercise; Mrs. Brown was darning a huge pile of stockings of assorted sizes, ranging all the way from papa's elevens down to Baby's cunning hose that always had holes in the knees. Baby was happy in a funny little world of her own, as different as possible from that of stupid, grown-up people. Angels, fairies, Santa Claus, the Sandman, were all common, every-day characters in Baby's world, and anything was possible there.

Grown-up eyes, looking at the sitting-room, would have seen a second-story front room in a city house, fronting south, with a large bay window where Celia's plant-stand stood. Bright winter days the sun streamed in through this bay window, glorifying the whole room; and in summer, the south breeze blew in there, bringing a faint grassy odor from the Kentucky hilltops, just visible over the opposite house-roofs. The old-fashioned red carpet, gay with pink and yellow roses and impossible ferns, added to the cheerful look of the room, if it was inartistic. Scattered about were hair-cloth easy-chairs and cane-seated rockers, evidently not too good for children to climb over. In the centre of the room stood a huge library table, an elephant among tables.

When Dr. Brown bought it, he said, "There! I've found at last a table large enough to accommodate the whole family; that can't be tipped over with the student-lamp, no matter how many children lean on it at once."

The Brown children grew up around this table, played games on it, house and fort under it, rubbed their elbows on it in the agonies of evening study, and were quite lost without it at those periods when it went into dock for repairs at the upholsterer's.

One side the room were the book-shelves, where each child had a shelf for its own treasures. The top shelf, where novels and poems were beginning to crowd "Little Women" and "The Old Fashioned Girl," was Celia's, as plainly as the much-worn "Robinson Crusoe," "Tom Brown at Rugby," "Frank on the Gunboat," etc., — "the best books in the world," Don was wont to say, — were Don's; or Grimm's Fairy Tales, Hans Christian Andersen, and "Arabian Nights," Nan's peculiar property; while any one could see whose was the bottom shelf, with its gay-covered, much-worn books about the most remarkable dogs, horses, cats, etc., ever seen, known to Baby as "The Mew-book," "The Whoa-book," etc.

Of all the pictures on the walls, Baby liked best the one over the mantel, in which a gentle mother held proudly in her arms a beautiful boy-baby. She knew that the baby's name was Jesus, and that it was Jesus too, in the other picture, around whom mothers and children were pressing.

"What is Jesus saying in the picture, Baby?" the children liked to ask, to hear her answer in a sweet tone of reverence, —

"Tum, my 'ittle children."

Such was Baby's world, as seen by grown-up eyes. But Baby's eyes saw a world vastly more interesting. In the first place, the sofa was n't a sofa at all. It hardly ever was a sofa. Just now it was a carriage. Nor was mamma's rocking-chair a chair, but a delightful pony, with long mane and tail, that pranced swiftly up hill and down, never tired, even when, as often, he travelled nine hundred miles in an afternoon, to Grandpa's house in Massachusetts. He was harnessed with some reins Celia had knit, gay with bright stripes and jingling with little bells.

Baby sits proudly in the carriage, with mamma's handkerchief on her head for a bonnet, holding an imaginary umbrella. Mamma rides along too, darning stockings, because Baby feels better satisfied to have company, and away they go. Baby stops and climbs down to pick grass for the pony, — the grass she sees growing thickly all over the carpet. They take various birds, pussies, and moo-cows into the carriage, there being plenty of room for everybody in that remarkable vehicle. Such a pleasant road they travel, up hill and down, through shady woods where baby stops to pick great handfuls of flowers from the walls. Now they come to a great river. They drive through it, Baby stopping to let pony drink.

They see any number of trees with cats in the branches. Baby suddenly points with delight at the chandelier, crying "Mew! Mew!"

Mamma, who knows full well what is expected of her, says with an air of surprise, "Why, if there is n't a puss-cat scrambling up that tree! What can be the matter?"

"Bow, wow, wow!" Baby says gruffly, and mamma sees plainly a naughty dog barking at the foot of the tree.

And so the pretty play goes on. The sitting-room is quiet, save the scratching of Celia's pen, the peaceful crackling of the fire, and Baby's sweet, prattling voice.

But now a door downstairs slams violently, a bang, bang, comes up the stairs, and the sitting-room door bursts open as if Don would jam it off the hinges if it did not yield at once. Don rushes in, slams his books down on the table, kicks over the rocking-chair, seizes Baby roughly and tosses her above his head. Baby, who does not enjoy this rude invasion of her pleasant world, cries and struggles to get away.

"It snows, mother! It snows!" shouts Don, in ear-splitting tones.

"My dear boy!" exclaims Mrs. Brown, at a loss how to begin her remarks, so many things need reproving at once. Celia, however, never lacks words to express her opinion of Don's behavior.

"You horrid boy!" she cries angrily. "Why can't you come into the house without tearing it down! I wish you would stay outdoors until you can learn to behave decently. There's no such thing as peace or quiet after you come home."

"It does snow, mother," continued Don, in no wise distressed by Celia's remarks. "Just look out the window! It's coming down faster and faster. Aren't you glad, Cele? We shall get some tip-top coasting, at last."

"As if I cared for coasting," said Celia, with the dignity of fifteen.

"Oh, ho! How very old and proper we are, all of a sudden! You coasted last winter; you know you did, Cele."

"Mother, I wish you would forbid Don's calling me 'Cele.' He knows well enough I detest it."

"You're always doing things to me I detest," retorted Don.

"Children, children, don't dispute. Try to avoid causes of bickering, instead of seeking them," said the long-suffering mother, soothing in her arms the crying baby. "There, darling, never mind. Don was only playing. He did n't mean to kick pony over."

"No, of course I did n't, you little duck," cried Don, hiding behind his mother, and beginning a game of peek-a-boo that soon turned Baby's tears into laughter.

"Well, I can't stay here all day playing with you, Miss Baby," said Don presently, giving Baby a rough hug and kiss that she bore like a little martyr, being fond of Don, and used to his style of caresses. "By-by."

"Where are you going, Don?"

"To get my sled down from the Gym."

"The idea!" said Celia. "The pavement is n't even whitened yet."

"Won't you please mind your own affairs, Miss Prim, and leave me alone?"

"Children, children!" cried Mrs. Brown.

"Well, Celia is always picking at me."

"Don is enough to provoke a saint."

"Oh, are you a saint? Never mistrusted it," said Don, diving for the door with this parting shot.

At the door he ran into a plump little girl, with rosy cheeks and shining eyes, hat on the back of her head, bangs flying wildly every way, who was rushing in as eagerly as Don out. Both laughed at the collision.

"Oh, Don, did you know it's snowing like everything?"

"Know it! I should think I did. Come on, Nan, I'm going to get the sled down."

"All right," said Nan, hastily dropping her satchel of school-books on the nearest chair.

"But, Nannie," said her mother, "what about your practising?"

"Oh dear, that dreadful piano! I wish the man who invented pianos was — boxed up in one! I'd pound it well! Do I have to practise to-night, mother, when the snow's just come, — the first this winter?" asked Nan, piteously.

Mrs. Brown knew well the excitement of the first snow, especially to Cincinnati children, who perhaps have only one good snow-storm all winter, — a brief joy, that soon melts away.

"You may go out now a while," she said, "and do your practising just before dinner. But first take care of your satchel."

"Oh dear, I wish things would take care of themselves," cried Nan, with whom it must be confessed "Oh dear" was a favorite exclamation, as she hastily flung the satchel into the closet and rushed off after Don, leaving every door open behind her.

"I wish Nan could ever learn to shut a door," said Celia, crossly, as she rose to close the doors.

Celia was naturally orderly, and Nan's carelessness annoyed her as much as Don's rough, noisy ways. In fact, Celia thought sometimes this was a world full of trouble, — the chief trouble, perhaps, being her own impatient temper and lack of self-control.

"Celia," said her mother, when the last echo of the children's noise had died away, and quiet once more settled over the sitting-room, "I wish you could see that your way of speaking to Don only makes him worse."

"I know it, mother; but I do get so out of patience with him. He 's so provoking!"

"We must learn to be patient when we are provoked. There 's little merit in being good-natured when everything goes to our mind."

"You tell me that so often, mother, I 'm tired of hearing it," exclaimed Celia.

Her mother said nothing. The unkind words and disrespectful tone seemed to echo through the quiet room and repeat themselves again and again in Celia's ears. Oh dear! Now she had done it again! What was the use of trying?

Celia wiped away a tear that blurred the French exercise, and said in a subdued voice, "Mother, I ought n't to have spoken to you that way. I believe my horrid temper gets worse every day."

"Try, my child; and keep on trying. Rome was n't built in a day. Often it is only by looking back many weeks, that we discover we have made even a little progress in overcoming a bad habit."

Celia sighed heavily and resumed her writing. Meantime, Don and Nan were having the greatest fun imaginable. Enough snow had accumulated to make it possible, by hard pulling, to drag each other on the sled up and down the pavement, and they could scrape up quite respectable snowballs with which to pelt each other and wash each other's faces. They were soon white and shaggy with snow from head to foot. Baby, a pretty picture, sat at the window looking out, clapping her hands in delight when Don threw snowballs at her that stuck to the window-pane and ran melting down.

But now the short winter day darkened into night; the street lamp-lighter ran briskly from lamp to lamp, leaving a little flame of gaslight in each as he hurried to the next; and Mrs. Brown called the reluctant children in.

Such a row of soaked mittens, leggings, shoes, and stockings as was spread around the kitchen range; and such red cheeks, big appetites, and gay spirits at the dinner-table, as Don, Nan, and the baby each tried to tell papa all about it at once!

CHAPTER III.

BORDER WARFARE.

IT snowed all night, and the next morning Cincinnati was hardly to be recognized, such a wild natural beauty had the snow contrived to confer on monotonous brick houses and stone streets. It hung in heavy fantastic masses from every cornice, sill, and post. Every tree bent beneath the snow loading its black branches. St. Paul's Methodist church was a dream of Gothic beauty, its huge, pointed roof going up sheer white against the blue sky,—all its points emphasized by heavy-hanging, fantastic caps of snow.

An air of adventure and excitement pervaded the streets. The great horse-railroad plough went swiftly by, its four horses plunging along, the snow flying each side of it, the men aboard seeming like Arctic explorers. Hardly any one was out early, except men and boys with shovels, to whom the snow, bringing a "job," was the greatest of boons. The Browns' door-bell rang every few moments.

"Clean your pavement for you?"

But Mrs. Brown had promised the job to a poor boy about Don's size, who was then eating his breakfast in the kitchen. Don was not hungry this morning, and so was disposed to find fault with his breakfast. When his mother came in from the kitchen, she said, —

"Well, Don, I 've found a boy that seems to think this a pretty good breakfast. He wanted to clean the pavement for a pair of old pantaloons. The rags he has on, I mistrust, don't cover him decently; but he wears a man's coat coming nearly to his feet. He has on a pair of men's boots, too, full of holes, and no stockings at all, I presume. I asked him where he lived. 'I don't live anywhere,' he said. 'But you must stay somewhere,' I replied. 'Where do you stay nights?' 'A livery-stable man down here lets me sleep in his stable,' said he, 'and sometimes gives me something to eat when I can't get a job.'"

Don said nothing; but it gave him an odd feeling to think of this boy, his own age, without home, or parents, or any of what seemed to Don the natural belongings of a boy. He hurried his breakfast and went out and worked hard, shovelling and sweeping with the boy.

"Thought I 'd give you a lift, old fellow, so you could get another job this morning," he explained to the boy, whose name he found to be Philip.

Philip's father was dead, his mother in an insane asylum, and he had no relatives or friends. When the pavement was cleaned, he left with a large bundle of Don's old clothes, shoes, etc., under his arm, and the Browns' shovel, loaned by Don to promote further jobs.

Mrs. Brown was not quite sure that she should ever see the shovel again ; but Don said, "Phil 's all right, mother. He 's a first-rate fellow. He 'll bring it back ; see if he don't."

On this indorsement the shovel was loaned, and came back in due time ; and Philip was added to the list of Mrs. Brown's regular pensioners.

The boys were now at no loss to dispose of their time. On the contrary, their trouble was to secure time enough from the trivial interruptions of school and errands for their own business. As soon as school was out, Jacob Bloch, Otto Schuster, Harry Eckert, Tommy Renfrew, and others of the Seventh Street boys met at Don's.

"Now boys, I tell you what," said Don, "let's build a fort right here, one side of our gate. It's a capital place, because if the policeman or any one chases us, we can dodge inside the gate, and hide behind the bay-window, or even cut through the side alley, and out the back gate into Van Horn Street."

The snow was wet and heavy, rolling easily into huge balls; and the Browns' front gate was soon well fortified, and the ramparts manned by a crowd of wide-awake boys, armed and equipped with snowballs, ready for fun. Jacob Bloch was posted at the corner below, to give timely warning of the policeman's approach.

Boys in a city live a border-warfare life. Sports innocent enough in country-fields, become dangerous and destructive on crowded streets. Hence a perpetual war rages between the boys and the police; and the delights of playing ball, flying kites, throwing stones, coasting, etc., can only be enjoyed by stealth and stratagem. There's no denying that the boys experience an agreeable sense of daring and danger in out-witting the policeman, — no doubt much like that known to "Stout Deloraine" and the other valiant "Blue Bonnets" of old, in their raids over the border. Of the boys, as of Scott's borderer, might truthfully be said, —

> "... bred to war,
> They knew the battle's din afar,
> And joyed to hear it swell.
> Their peaceful day was slothful ease;
> Nor harp, nor pipe, their ears could please
> Like the wild slogan yell."

The balls flew merrily from the Browns' fortification, pelting indiscriminately draymen, expressmen, car-drivers and conductors, — now and then a foot-passenger.

"My! I hit that lady," exclaimed Harry. "I did n't mean to. I was aiming at the plug hat on that gentleman just in front of her."

The lady, however, took the accident very good-naturedly, looking around at the boys and laughing as she brushed off the snow. The boys had hitherto refrained from throwing at ladies, but were now getting wild with excitement; and encouraged by this success, Harry could not resist the broad back of a stout, red-faced lady, who had just sailed majestically past them up the street.

No smiles from this lady. On the contrary, she looked furious and said, "You bad, wicked boys! I shall report you to the policeman! I'll have every one of you arrested!"

The boys reconnoitred cautiously up the street, saw that the policeman was indeed coming, and took refuge behind the bay-window.

"People are so different," said Harry; "you never know how they're going to take things."

"I know it," said Don. "Some of the men on wagons snowball back again, and act just like big boys. Then some of them are so cross, and swear, and get down and chase us, — can't take a bit of fun."

"Come on, boys," now shouted the scout Jacob. "The coast is all clear. Policeman's round the corner, and there's a sleigh coming down the street."

The sleigh showed the gauntlet it had already run, by the snowballs plastering it all over. Our boys were about to add to its decorations.

The policeman's suspicions, however, were not so easily allayed; and in the most unfair manner he doubled on his beat, and was back again in a moment, so that Jacob barely had time to shout, "Hi boys, run! He 's coming!" and join in the grand scramble of retreat. Pursuit was so hot that the boys had to take refuge in the laundry, where, lying low, they had the pleasure of hearing the policeman rush furiously by, down the side alley into Van Horn Street. They did not venture out for some time, until Bridget discovered them, and said, —

"What are you doing in my laundry? A pack of dirty boys tracking wet snow all over my clean floor! Pretty business, I should think! Get right out of here, this minute! I 'll tell your father of your actions, this blessed night;" and so on, Don not waiting to hear her concluding remarks.

It was fortunate the boys improved the snow to the utmost; for in another day its beauty was gone, and it became a dirty nuisance, clogging gutters and impeding travel. Then came a thaw, and everything was afloat; the crossings turned into seas of black water, whose unknown depths pedestrians hesitated to try.

This state of things threw the boys again into despair. But Don proposed a plan that met with general approval.

"Let 's have a theatre, boys, up in the Gym. We have n't had one this winter." The boys' spare time was therefore now devoted to preparations for a grand theatrical entertainment.

Over the stable was a large room, with bare rafters, which Dr. Brown had fitted up as a rude gymnasium for the children to exercise in, —"let off their steam," as he said, — in bad weather. The young Browns, and those privileged friends whom they were permitted to invite there, delighted in the freedom of the "Gym;" and many a circus, theatre, school, journey, and what not, had its rough walls witnessed.

But the present theatre was adjourned *sine die* when the famous cold snap came, — such a cold snap as had hardly ever been known in Cincinnati. Streets and gutters became ponds of ice; Don and his friends skated to school on the icy pavement, and grand skating-matches came off every recess in the school-yard. Had it not been for those marplots who *will* put salt, sawdust, etc., on the streets, the boys' sport would have been unlimited.

> "As the days lengthened
> The cold strengthened,"

until finally the Ohio River froze over from shore to shore,—an almost unprecedented event. Wagons could cross on the ice, and where the ferry-boats usually ran, were now well-travelled roads. Crowds of people gathered on the banks, watching the parties of merry skaters, or crossed to Kentucky and back, that they might be able to say hereafter that they had performed this feat. Boys dragged boards and sticks out on the ice, and built fires here and there. One enterprising man erected a shanty midway between the Ohio and Kentucky shores, where, it is to be feared, he did a thriving business selling drinks to thirsty passers.

It was a novel scene; and Don, like all the other boys, was fascinated by it, and as crazy to be on the river as his fearful mother was anxious to prevent his going.

Finally, both plaintiff and defendant laid the case before Dr. Brown.

"We will compromise the matter," said the Doctor. "Don may go down to the river whenever Walter Holmes goes, and will take charge of him, on condition — mind this, Don — on condition that you never go alone."

"All right, father. Walt 's going down tonight after school. He said he was."

"Very well, then. You may go too. But you must remember the condition. You know you have such a good 'forgetery,'" for thus the Doctor named the faculty in Don known as memory in other people.

"Oh, no, I won't forget, father."

Walter Holmes was a boy of fifteen, living on Seventh Street near the Browns',— a great friend of Don, though several years older. His mother was a widow, with several children whom she was struggling to educate. Walter was the oldest, a fine scholar, ambitious, and privately resolved to "be somebody," one of these days. Meantime, no one thought any the worse of him because he was up at four o 'clock mornings, selling newspapers before he went to school, or was ready for almost any job Saturdays whereby an honest penny could be earned. He often came down to exercise on the parallel bars and acting pole in the Browns' gymnasium; and he and Don were quite intimate friends.

Nothing is more convenient for a city boy than to have a friend somewhat larger than himself to help fight his battles; and Don had all the more fun on the river because in Walter's company.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BOO.

COLD snaps nearly always affect the temper unfavorably. People are cold and a little belated mornings, and everything goes hard and wrong. So, at least, it seemed at Dr. Brown's on the cold Friday of that winter.

"The water pipes are frozen," was the first tidings to greet the Doctor when he came down to breakfast, having spent most of the night with a very sick patient.

The head of the family is never made happy by hearing that the water pipes are frozen. Dr. Brown, although quick-tempered, was usually the pleasantest of men; but this morning he ate his breakfast in glum silence, with a frown that boded no good to Don, who came down late.

"What's the meaning of this, Don?" asked his father, sternly. "I called you twice, and you answered both times."

"It was so awful cold, father, I hated to get up," whined Don.

"So cold! Humph! When I was a boy, I used to get up before daylight, with the mercury below zero, start the fire, go out to the barn and do half the chores before breakfast. Boys are of no account nowadays. I don't know what the world's coming to, I'm sure. See that this does n't occur again, Don;" and the Doctor departed for the plumbers.

Upstairs in mamma's room, the Boo had come; and Mrs. Brown, who was belated, and felt hurried and less patient than usual, was having a struggle to dress Baby.

Baby Brown, with her great blue eyes full of wondering innocence, her yellow hair as fine and light as thistle-down, her round face and dainty mouth, looked like a little angel that had lost its way, and strayed into this world by mistake. And a little angel she was, except at those unfortunate times when the Boo came.

The Boo was Baby's name for the bears and other ferocious animals at the Zoo. One night when she obstinately refused to run and bring papa's slippers, a little duty generally her delight, mamma asked, "Why is Baby so naughty?"

"The Boo won't let me," explained Baby, solemnly. And henceforth this was her name for the naughty, obstinate little spirit that sometimes possessed her.

This morning she kicked and cried, didn't want to be washed, said that her stockings wrinkled, her shoes hurt her, and so on.

Mamma tried a little stratagem often successful in restoring Baby's good-humor.

"Dear me," she said, "I believe the naughty Boo is coming. Let's drive him away, and not let him get into Baby. Go away, bad Boo!"

"No! No!" cried Baby, "I want the Boo!"

The Boo, thus welcomed, came and stayed, making a deal of trouble. When, after a great struggle, Baby was finally dressed, and they came downstairs,—Baby weeping and wailing because she had to wear a blue gingham apron,—mamma said, "Baby, I'll tell you something funny. Let's lock the old Boo up in the boot-and-shoe closet!"

Baby liked this, and stopped crying at once to watch with great interest while mamma ordered the wicked Boo into the little closet under the stairs, and locked the door on him. She went in to breakfast all smiles, the tears still wet on her cheeks, to inform Don in great glee, "The old Boo all yocked up in the 'ittle tloset."

But the Boo, crafty fellow, must have contrived somehow to get out; for he appeared in several of the Brown family before this unlucky Friday was over.

As Nan was flying about, getting ready for school, her mother gave the usual caution, —

"Be sure to wear your rubbers, Nan. Your shoes are not very thick, and you have a sore throat, you know."

"Yes 'm," said Nan, shortly.

"Mother *always* wants I should wear rubbers," she thought. "I don't see the use of being so awful particular."

Being belated, she finally in her hurry forgot the rubbers, until just outside the gate. Then the Boo entered into Nan.

"There, if I have n't forgotten those hateful old rubbers! I don't care. I shall be late if I go back after them now. I can tell mother I forgot them, for I really did."

Nan liked to slide on the pavement on her way to school, and rubbers interfered with this sport. So she readily yielded to the Boo's suggestion, and decided to forget the rubbers. But some uneasy stirrings of conscience within made her so uncomfortable and, consequently, cross all day, that everything went wrong at school.

The Boo next stirred up a fearful dispute between Don and Celia, and made Celia cross to her mother, because mother asked her to take care of the baby while she went out to attend to the plumbers, when Celia wanted to study every moment on the French lesson, which she had neglected the evening previous for the too great fascinations of a tempting story.

But the Boo finally went off to school under Don's jacket. Don always detested blacking his shoes, and decided this morning that it was altogether too cold to perform this useless duty. But his mother caught a glimpse of his rusty, red shoes, and called him back to black them.

"I shall be late to school," said Don, sulkily.

"You will have plenty of time if you hurry," said his mother.

Don went through the kitchen, banging the doors so hard that Bridget — who with her kitchen all torn up and disordered with plumbers and pipes, and her work at a stand-still, had perhaps the best right to be cross of any one — gave him what Don called "a regular going over," winding up with threats of giving Mrs. Brown immediate notice if she was to be bothered with noisy boys "tracking and slamming" through her kitchen.

Bridget had lived with the Browns ever since Celia was a baby, and was devoted to all the children; but the Boo this morning was too much even for her attachment to the family.

Don was as long as possible blacking his shoes, feeling somehow as if it would punish mother if he should be late to school. Of course he was late; and when, as a result, the teacher kept him in at recess, he behaved so disrespectfully that after school at night he was sent up to the Principal's room, where he received a severe reprimand, coupled with dark hints of a possible thrashing in the near future on a repetition of the offence.

By the time Don was released, and started off sulkily alone through the deserted school-yard, the Boo in him had grown as big as Don himself, and possessed the whole boy. Don felt injured and abused, an innocent victim of unjust persecution, as if everybody and everything were against him.

A part of the "everything" was, that Walter could not go down to the river that night. And the weather had moderated since morning, and all the weather-wise were predicting a big thaw and break-up of the river.

"I never can have any fun," thought Don, moodily. "I don't care. I'll go down to the river alone. I'm not going to lose all the fun."

The "don't care" meant that something in Don's heart spoke up feebly against the Boo, and reminded Don of his promise to his father. But Don, like Baby, wanted the Boo to stay. He felt cross and ugly, as if the general ill-treatment of the world had cancelled his promise to his father, and he did n't care what he did.

He tied his sled behind a big brewery wagon drawn by a span of horses, as big and handsome as fire-engine horses. But to tie to wagons was a thing strictly forbidden by his father, who well knew how dangerous was this favorite diversion of city boys.

"I don't care," said Don, again. "Father never wants me to have fun like the other boys," still answering that persistent something in his soul, as he twitched and jerked rapidly along after the wagon, whose spirited horses were now trotting briskly.

Don thought the wagon was going on down Freeman Street, directly to the river. But unexpectedly it made a sudden turn, and went swiftly around a corner, hurling Don's sled violently to one side. Don, unprepared, was thrown off in front of a big pork wagon, whose driver did not see him in season to stop his horses. Then everything grew dark; and the next thing Don knew, he was coming back out of the darkness to find a great crowd gathered about him, conscious that his right leg hurt dreadfully when a policeman tried to raise him up.

Mrs. Brown, who had been standing at the window looking anxiously up and down the street wondering what could make Don so late from school, felt all her worst forebodings more than realized when a wagon, escorted by a procession of boys, stopped at her door, and she saw a policeman lifting carefully out in his arms Don, looking limp, pale, and deathly.

"Oh, Celia!" she gasped, "Don is killed! I always knew he would be!"

CHAPTER V.

DON FIGURES AS AN INVALID.

DR. BROWN found that Don's right leg was broken, and that he was badly cut and bruised. It hurt Don more than all his bruises, or having his leg set, to tell his father how it happened ; but to his credit be it said, he told a straight-forward, manly story, — the whole truth. His father made little comment, feeling that Don's suffering was a sufficient lesson for the present.

But Don did a deal of thinking on his own account, in the long, long watches of the night, when he could not sleep because his injuries made him so feverish and restless, while he must lie so uncomfortably with his right leg motionless in a plaster bandage. Sickness was a new experience to Don.

How still it was all through the house! The hall clock rang out, loud and solemn, tick! tick!

through the darkness and silence. Don wondered if people ever died from broken legs. He certainly felt very sick and miserable. How long one night was! It seemed like a week. How he longed for morning to come! He was half-tempted to ring the little bell on the stand beside him. But it would be a shame to call up poor mother, who was so tired from running and waiting on him all day.

There was the hall clock still at it, solemnly saying, it seemed to Don, "Think! think!"

"If I ever do get well, I know one thing; I'll try to behave myself, and mind father better. Father's awfully kind to me. Every one's so kind to me now I'm sick,—even Celia! Oh dear, it's awful to be sick! Don't I wish I'd never tied on behind that old wagon! Serves me right, though!"

After a few days, when the fever left him and the bruises were less painful, Don began to enjoy his sickness better. Every one was, as he said, so kind to him. He lay in his bed like a king, and every one ran at his bidding, and was a slave to all his whims and fancies.

Celia was ready to drop her book or fancy-work any moment, and read aloud to him for hours, even in "Frank on the Gunboat," or the "Prairies," or wherever else that remarkable youth sojourned.

Nan played checkers, backgammon, logomachy with him, and ran up as soon as she came from school to tell him all the news, and how many people inquired for him. Mother brought her sewing and sat by him, which at once made Don's room the centre of the house; for, somehow, wherever mother was, all the family were sure to gather.

Baby was his greatest amusement. She was his dear little nurse. She sat on his bed and patted his cheek with her soft hand, and said lovingly, "Poor Don."

She ran on little errands for him, and was very important and happy taking care of him. Sometimes Don played school with her. He was the teacher, and Baby, sitting in state on the bed, the school.

"How old are you, Baby Brown?"

Baby holds up two fat fingers. "I big, big dirl. I wear yeal yubbers, like mamma's."

"What color is your hair, you big, big girl?"

"Rallow."

"And your eyes?"

"Boo."

"And where did you get your eyes so blue?"

"Out of the sky, as I came through," answers Baby, in perfect faith.

"Now count your fingers."

Baby spreads out the fat little fingers and strikes into a funny counting drawl, "Yum, two, free, five, six, nine!"

"That's a nice girl. Now say your little verse, and then it will be recess, and we'll eat an apple together."

With infinite pains, Don had taught her to say:

> "Whatever brawls disturb the street,
> There should be peace at home;
> Where sisters dwell, and brothers meet,
> Quarrels should never come."

Only Baby would say "squirrels" instead of "quarrels."

Some days, however, the school did not progress so smoothly. Baby would be seized with a mischievous, contrary fit, and would not do as Don wished. When he tried to make her, she teased him, stealing his things and running off with them, fully aware of his inability to give chase.

One day his mother, coming into the room, found a very stormy atmosphere. Don, his face flushed and angry, burst out, "Mother, I do wish you 'd make Baby behave. She bothers me to death. She's just run off with my apple. She's the biggest little nuisance I ever saw."

His mother said nothing, but looking over her work-basket found a newspaper scrap, which she handed Don.

"Here 's a little poem I found the other day, written by an English woman of the poorer class, but on whom God has evidently bestowed the poet's heart. Read it, please, Don."

Don was a fine reader, and liked to read aloud.

"Sweet, laughing child, the cottage door
Stands free and open now.
But oh, its sunshine gilds no more
The gladness of thy brow!
Thy merry step hath passed away,
Thy laughing sport is hushed for aye.

"Thy mother by the fireside sits
And listens for thy call;
And slowly, slowly, as she knits,
Her quiet tears down fall;
Her little hindering thing is gone,
And undisturbed she may work on."

Don's voice trembled at the last, and both his eyes and his mother's were suspiciously "teary round the lashes" when he finished.

"I know it is vexatious to be bothered, Don; but how we should miss even the bothering, if the 'little hindering thing' were gone forever! I called on Mrs. Maynard last week. You know she has recently lost both her children. You can't think how sad it looked, to see the little, unused rocking-chair standing in the corner, or how the still, empty house seemed to echo with loneliness."

Don looked at Baby's little basket rocking-chair before the fire, looking so cunning and just like her; and a pang went through his heart as he thought how he should feel if he knew Baby were never coming back to it again.

Just then the door opened, and a rosy, roguish little face peeped in cautiously at Don.

"Come here this minute and kiss me, you little duck. Don won't be cross any more."

And now Don was no longer cross, Baby did not care to tease him, but became again his devoted nurse and playfellow.

Don enjoyed all the honors and privileges of sickness. His boy friends dropped in often, told him all the important news of the school-world, brought him their favorite books to read, and played games with him.

One day Nan came in with a lovely bouquet. "Oh, Don, who do you suppose sent you this? Nina Burgess!"

Don blushed, and looked rather foolish, but was secretly much pleased. All his set of boys considered Nina the prettiest girl on Seventh Street, and Don had escorted her to the last surprise party.

Some of the neighbors were so thoughtful as to send him in tempting delicacies to eat, — an attention highly appreciated by Don. His difficulties were not of a nature to affect his appetite, and meal-times were a welcome relief to the monotony of the long, long days.

"Is n't it almost lunch-time?" he usually began asking about eleven o'clock; and it needed the strength of an able-bodied person to carry the waiter-loads of provisions that went to his room.

One day a wonderful thing happened. Miss Parsons, Don's teacher, came to call on him, and inquire how he was getting along.

Don felt somewhat embarrassed, remembering that their last parting had not been wholly pleasant; but Miss Parsons seemed to have forgotten all about it, and chatted away so agreeably, saying how much she missed Don, how glad she should be to see him back again, etc., that Don's heart smote him that he had ever called her "Old Parsons." He had no idea that a teacher could be so agreeable.

To be sure, she did suggest that perhaps Don would soon be able to study at home, and offered to send his lessons down by Jacob Bloch; but then you can't expect a teacher, any more than a leopard, wholly to change her spots.

She said Don must be sure to get well for Longfellow Day; and asked him to learn "The Old Clock on the Stairs," for recitation on that occasion. This request was really a boon to Don, for time began to hang heavier and heavier on his hands, as the days of his confinement ran into weeks.

His accident had become an old story now, both to himself and everybody else; and invalidism had long since lost the charms of novelty. The boys were busy about their own affairs, and forgot to come and see him; and altogether Don could but notice that the world in general seemed to be going on quite comfortably without him.

He was now hobbling about the house on crutches; and his wild hoppings about the house, and the various experiments he tried were a continual source of terror to his mother, who ran to the foot of the stairs whenever she heard him coming down, to pick up his fragments when he should tumble headlong from top to bottom, a calamity she constantly foreboded.

Altogether, life was so dull that Don, to kill time, finally took to studying of his own accord, a thing he would never have believed of himself.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FLOOD.

DON was destined to a further trial of his patience almost beyond endurance. The unusually cold, snowy winter ended at last in a great thaw. A warm rain poured incessantly for a week. The streets ran in rivers that threatened to sweep the horse-cars from their track, indicating, on a small scale, what was taking place all over the vast section of country drained by the Ohio. Up in the mountains great snow-banks were melting away; tidings came that "the Big Sandy was booming," and all the other large tributaries of the Ohio followed suit.

All was excitement along the riverside. Owners of the steam-boats, coal barges, wharf-boats, frozen fast in the thick ice, strengthened their fastenings, and waited with grim resignation for the dreaded break-up. Finally, when the rotten ice could no longer resist the swelling current underneath, the mighty Ohio, like a chained giant, shook off its fetters and began slowly but surely rising up its high banks, over them, and taking possession of the surrounding country.

At first, except to the unlucky dwellers in Rat Row, it was merely a novel and pleasant excitement. All Cincinnati was on the Suspension Bridge, viewing the ice. Dr. Brown took the girls down one night after school. They came home full of excitement, which added fresh fuel to the raging flame of Don's discontent.

"Oh, Don," said Nan, "it 's a shame you can't go out."

"Humph," said Don, crossly. It was bad enough to be shut up in the house, without being pitied.

"The bridge is just crowded with people. The river is away up into the bottom story of the houses in Rat Row, and they say it 's going higher. The ice is perfectly wonderful! The river is jammed, from shore to shore, with floating cakes of ice, crushing and grinding along.

In one place, where there is a gorge, great cakes are crowded out, and piled far up on the banks. You ought to see it."

"Just my luck!" groaned Don, who felt like a caged bear at this exciting crisis.

"It looked wild and Arctic," said Celia. "Made me think of Dr. Kane, and Lieut. Greeley, and the North Pole generally."

"All kinds of things are floating down from up river," said Nan. "Great long logs that go thud into the stone piers, rise up out of the water like live sea-monsters, turn over, and splash in again. And pieces of coal barges, and wagons, and barns even, and all kinds of things!"

Here Nan stopped, because out of breath; and Celia took unfair advantage of her helpless state to go on.

"We saw a cat floating down on a shed roof —"

"A live kitty, Don!" gasped Nan.

"Every one," said Celia, "was laughing and pointing at it; but Nan almost cried, until papa said he thought the roof would float up against land somewhere, so the cat could get ashore, and find a good home."

"I don't care," said Nan, "it was such a pretty white kitty, and it mewed so pitifully! How should we have felt, if it had been us?"

"Pooh, I should n't care," said Don, "I should like the fun of it. I 'd just float about on the cakes of ice awhile, and then jump from cake to cake till I reached the shore."

"On crutches, I suppose," said Celia. "I thought of Eliza in 'Uncle Tom's Cabin,' to-day. You know Mrs. Stowe used to live out in Walnut Hills, and papa says she founded that story of Eliza on a real incident that happened up above here, at Ripley, in old slave-times."

"I think father might let me go down on the bridge," said Don. "I could manage it easy enough, in the horse-cars."

But father was immovable. He knew Don too well. Once out, and excited by the flood, there was no knowing what he might attempt.

And still the river continued to rise, until what had at first been regarded as a mere spectacle was recognized to be a great public calamity. All lower Cincinnati became another Venice, minus the palaces. The gas-works were submerged; and happy the families that had old, forgotten kerosene lamps on dusty top shelves! Dark streets, along which towered tall rows of houses, totally dark, but for the occasional feeble glimmering of a lamp or candle, added to the gloom that depressed every one. Benevolent people kept lamps burning in their windows all night to light the streets; and it was surprising how far into the dismal, rainy night shone the cheerful radiance of even one lamp.

Baby Brown was afraid at night, going up to bed by the dim light of a candle. She clutched tightly hold of mamma's dress, peering fearfully about at the dark shadows in the corners, and buried her head hastily under the sheet when at last safely landed in the snug harbor of bed.

Candle-making was the only business helped by the flood, except the new business of boating, which suddenly sprang into existence. Boats and rafts of every description were hastily knocked together, and a thriving business was done in carrying passengers about the flooded districts. But after two women were drowned by the collision of a skiff with a submerged lamp post, the police stopped sight-seeing, allowing no boats about the streets except those conveying passengers on necessary business.

Thousands of people, driven from their homes, were huddled in churches, school-houses, and police stations. Other thousands were living in the second stories of submerged houses, dependent for food on the exertions of the charitable.

Bridget was almost unable to work, she was so distressed by the misfortunes of a cousin who had been living in a small story-and-a-half house on Water Street. The water came in so rapidly on the first floor that the family were obliged to move hastily upstairs into the little attic under the roof, leaving food, clothes, and furniture to ruin. Here a little baby was born ; and the poor mother lay listening to the fearful roaring of the waters, expecting every moment the house would go. Finally they were discovered by a relief-boat and taken off, the children tossed to the crowd on shore, and scattered no one knew where ; while the mother and baby were taken in by a poor widow, who had only two rooms, and in which another family had already taken refuge. The kindness of the poor to the poor was often illustrated in like manner, during the flood.

Mrs. Brown hunted up bundles of old clothing, bedclothes, etc., for Bridget's cousin; and Dr. Brown visited her, had her moved to better quarters, and, with some difficulty, succeeded in finding the scattered children.

Calls for relief for flood sufferers continued to come, and Mrs. Brown sent off bundle after bundle of clothing, until Celia said, "Really, mother, if you don't leave us at least one change of clothes, we too shall be forced to apply to the Associated Charities as some of the sufferers."

Baby caught the contagion, and came one day to her mother with a newspaper bundle "for the sufferers," which proved to contain her best white dress, a Noah's ark, her little slippers, and pieces of bread taken from the bread-box when Bridget was too busy to notice.

Mamma would not nip the kind thought in the bud, but let Baby do up a bundle of toys and cookies for Bridget's cousins, the young McCarthys.

Death and birth could not stop for the flood, but went on all the same. A coffin was passed out from a second-story window, and the funeral procession followed in skiffs. Children were born on boats, and in school-houses. A little one, born on the "Emma Graham," was named for the boat of her birth, — more fortunate than the unlucky child called "February Flood!"

Dr. Brown came home late every night, almost exhausted. One night he said, "I suppose you would have enjoyed nothing better than making my rounds with me to-day, Don. Several times I had to take a skiff to reach my patients, and then get in at their windows. At one house, I rowed in through a window to the foot of the second-story stairs, and tied my boat to the banisters while I made my visit."

"It's the meanest thing that ever happened that I must break my leg just now, of all times," growled Don. "Here I am, shut up in the house like an old lady, losing all the fun. Probably there'll never be another such flood."

"It's certainly to be hoped not," said his father.

"It's providential, I am certain," said Mrs. Brown, referring not to the flood, but to Don's misfortune. "If you had been well, you would have been wild to be out in the skiffs, and on the rafts — "

"Of course I should."

"And you would certainly have been drowned."

"You must remember whose fault it is, Don," said his father. "In this world, seemingly little things often bring such a long trail of unforeseen consequences after them, that the only safe way is to do right, every time. Then you 're not to blame, whatever happens."

The next day the rain at last stopped, and Dr. Brown took Don out in his carriage to see something of the flood. They drove down Race Street to the corner of Third, and stopped where a crowd of people — their feet almost in the water — stood along a rope stretched across the street. It was a strange sight. The usually busy street, thronged with wagons, drays, and horse-cars, was now a dreary waste of dirty, yellow water lapping against the second-story windows of those blocks nearest the river. Block after block of warehouses rose from the water, their cellars filled with valuable merchandise which there had been no time to save, the water having risen beyond all expectations.

A steam fire-engine, floating about the streets on a flat-boat, ready for instant use, attracted

Don's attention at once. "Oh, father, look at that engine," he said. "What fun it would be to see a good fire in one of those flooded houses!"

"Don!" exclaimed his father, reprovingly.

"I don't mean I want a fire to happen, of course; but if there's going to be one, I just wish I could be here to see it, — that's all."

"What are those skiffs with white flags?" asked Don, presently.

"The relief-boats of the Chamber of Commerce and Associated Charities. They are divided into squadrons, called the Vine-Street Fleet, the Race-Street Fleet, and so on, each with its own Commodore. Cincinnati boasts a navy of her own, you see. They row about constantly among the submerged houses, carrying food and fuel to thousands who would starve but for this help. Some of our best ladies go about in these boats, helping people, day after day. The people let down baskets from their windows, and the relief committee fill them."

"How jolly! I wish our house was submerged. It must be lots of fun for the boys."

"It is n't very jolly for any one, Don. There are fourteen thousand men out of work now; and if relief were not pouring in so generally from all over our country, if so many people were not straining every nerve, doing their utmost in every way to prevent suffering, it would be something terrible. Many of these people will never be able to get back where they were before the flood. I saw a poor working-man yesterday, looking grimly at his little house tipped over on one side, the furniture floating about. He said, 'I 've worked and saved and pinched for years, to get a little home. Now there it is. It 's no use for *me* to try.' There 's great danger such men will take to drinking in despair, and go irretrievably down hill."

Even Don's boyish heart was touched by the thought of this terrible mass of suffering; and that evening, when they were all talking about the flood, he said, "I wish I could do something to help the sufferers."

"You can," said his mother. "If you will take care of Baby for me to-morrow forenoon, I will go up to our district's Associated Charities and work. I hear they are over-run with applicants, and need more assistants."

"Take care of Baby!" exclaimed Don, who

had thought of more showy and romantic ways of helping than this.

"Yes. It won't, I know, be so fascinating as going about in a skiff, for instance, carrying provisions; but it will help quite as much. You will be like those men who sent a substitute to fight for them, when unable to go to the war themselves. I will be your substitute."

"Well, I'll do it."

"I'm afraid your patience won't hold out all the forenoon."

"Oh, yes, it will. I'll take just the nicest kind of care of her. See if I don't," said Don.

So the next morning Mrs. Brown went away immediately after breakfast, and stayed until one o'clock.

It was a long forenoon for Don. He had planned to get his lessons, while Baby was to amuse and take care of herself, under his general superintendence. But babies and plans don't always go well together, as Don was to learn.

Don arranged a nice pile of playthings on the floor, set Baby in the midst, and began studying. He was soon so deep in some difficult problems that he forgot all about Baby. Suddenly it struck him that she was unnaturally still. He well knew stillness to be an alarming symptom in her case, and started up to see what mischief she was in. He found her busily engaged breaking leaves off a choice slip of geranium, which some one had given Celia, and which Celia was nursing with tenderest care.

Baby held the last leaf in her hand. Dipping the stalk in the earth for salt, she calmly bit off a piece and ate it.

"Don eat nice celery," she said, extending the stump to him.

"I wonder if eating geranium leaves will kill children," thought Don, frightened. "I guess Celia will finish her, if the geraniums don't. My, Baby Brown! What a terrible little mischief you are!" exclaimed Don, as he discovered further evidence of Baby's industry.

Baby had dug earth out of the pots upon the carpet. Then wetting her little handkerchief and dipping it in the earth, she had faithfully rubbed windows and furniture with the mud thus manufactured.

"Me Bridget, cleaning," explained she, sweetly.

Don felt provoked enough to shake her, but restrained himself by an effort. He lay down on the carpet and built wonderful block-houses and towers for her, which she was delighted to knock over. When she seemed thoroughly interested, Don said, "Now Baby build some nice block-houses herself," and resumed his studies, meaning to keep a careful watch of her.

But before he knew it she had gone to the coal-hod, and was having a lovely time playing with the coal, — her little fat hands, face, and clothes equally black. Don knew Bridget was busy making bread, so he took Baby to the bathroom and washed her himself as well as he could, — the general effect, however, left by his well-meant efforts being a decided streakiness.

"Now Baby *must* be a good little girl and let Don study. Baby play school," and he gave her his slate and pencil and some books.

Baby seemed so delighted to mark on the slate, that Don settled down to his geography in great peace of mind, and was making some progress with the mountains of Asia, when he discovered Baby with the mucilage bottle, busily pasting together the leaves of his reader.

"You bad, bad little girl!" cried Don, jumping up and seizing Baby so roughly that she began crying at the top of her voice.

This was dreadful. Don could endure anything better than her crying. He tried building block-houses, made the rubber moo-cow and Peepy the doll dance a funny dance together, but all in vain. Baby wailed louder than ever, and refused to be comforted. Don saw he must invent something new.

"Baby stop crying and we 'll play something new,—something Baby never saw before. Don will make a choo-choo!"

When Mrs. Brown came home, the noise in the sitting-room assured her that Baby was at least alive. On opening the door, she was rather dismayed. A long row of chairs extended across the room, filling all the space not littered with books and playthings. This was a railroad train. In one chair, as freight, were piled Celia's writing-desk, Mrs. Brown's work-basket, and all the other smaller movables in the room. The breakfast bell was tied to the front chair by a long string, which Baby, as engineer, sat pulling, in great glee at the din she was making. Her face, hands, apron, and even her yellow hair, were streaked with a mixture of mucilage and coal-black.

Don, as passenger, sat in the rear chair, his lame foot up in another, his hair rumpled, his face flushed, looking thoroughly exhausted.

"I 'm so glad you have come home at last," he said. "I thought you were never coming. This forenoon has been a week long at least. I could n't do another thing but just take care of her, and I 'm tired to death!"

Mrs. Brown saw that Don had done the best he could, which is all that can reasonably be expected of any one. But, privately, she decided she would not go up to work for the Associated Charities again very soon.

CHAPTER VII.

NAN'S TRIALS.

NANNIE BROWN was such a round-faced, rosy, wide-awake, happy-looking little girl, one would not have imagined, to look at her, that she had ever known a trial in her life. Papa called her his "little wild colt," she was so full of fun and play. But Nan sometimes thought she had more than her share of tribulation.

Her chief trial was that she went to Mrs. Dunnell's Private School for Young Ladies. This was the best as well as the most expensive private school in the city. Although Dr. Brown enjoyed a good income from his large practice, he was far from being rich. But he felt that wherever else he might be forced to economize, it should not be in the matter of his children's education.

"If I leave them money," he sometimes said, "they may lose it. But a good education is a certain investment. It can never be taken from them. I will help them to help themselves. And the girls shall have as good a chance as the boys."

His oldest son, Stanford, was in Harvard College, ranking high as a scholar, — a promising young man, full of high aspirations.

"It 's awfully hard on a fellow to have a perfect brother," Don often said. "I should really hate Stan, he 's held up so all the time to me for an example, if he were n't such a jolly good fellow. It 's all the time '*Stanford* never did that,' or '*Stanford* always did this,' till I declare I 'm almost tired of him, sometimes."

Celia was devoting her time this year largely to music, in which she excelled; but she still went to Mrs. Dunnell's daily for recitations in French and English literature, while Nan was a regular pupil there.

Mrs. Dunnell was a thorough lady and excellent teacher, gifted with the faculty of selecting capable assistants. Nan liked her and the other teachers. Her trials came from her schoolmates. They were largely girls from wealthy families, whose every whim was humored by indulgent but short-sighted parents. They seemed to live in a world wholly foreign to Nan's, where widely different views of life prevailed. The idea of duty seemed not to enter there. It was all pleasure, — the ruling motive "what I want to do," not what "I ought to do." In the home-world and school-world, Nan moved in two totally distinct atmospheres. While Nan had the sense to know that home-ideas were the truest and healthiest, she could not help being influenced by her surroundings.

One day she came home with such a sour, unhappy look on the face generally so bright and cheerful, that her mother was struck with it. Looking back, she suddenly saw that Nan had not seemed as happy as usual of late, but had been irritable and snappish, — something rare with her. The pleasant voice that generally went singing up and down the house had been silent; nor had she lately been obliged to reprove Nan for whistling while making her bed. Whistling was not a lady-like accomplishment, but it indicated a light heart.

Mrs. Brown had been so absorbed in caring for Don that she had not noticed these things at the time; but now, looking back, she felt sure that something was wrong with Nan, and her heart smote her that perhaps she had been, unconsciously, neglecting her dear little daughter. For a wonder, Mrs. Brown was alone in the sitting-room to-day, when Nan came home.

"What is the matter, Nannie dear?" she said. "Has anything gone wrong?"

"Oh, mother!" cried Nan, bursting into tears. "I wish I need n't go to that hateful old school any more!"

"Why, what is the matter, my dear child?"

"Oh, everything! I'm just as unhappy as I can be! I thought I would n't bother you about it, — you were so busy with Don and the baby, — but I can't endure it any longer! I don't want to go to that school another day!"

"Nannie, mother never is too busy to help her little girl. Now tell me all about it," said Mrs. Brown, drawing Nan up comfortably to her.

"I don't believe you can understand, mother. Everything is so different at school. The girls come to school dressed so — you've no idea. They wear such lovely dresses, and ever so many different ones, made elegantly and trimmed gorgeously! And at recess, they get together and talk about their dresses, and who made them, and who is the most stylish dress-maker, and the fashions, and all that. Lou Kibby is the most stylish girl in school. Her father has that big whiskey distillery down by the river, you know, where we cross the ferry to go picnicking in Kentucky. Mrs. Kibby has just come home from Europe; and she brought Lou ever so many lovely dresses from Paris. All the girls say they are too lovely for anything. My party-dress does n't begin to compare with the dresses she wears to school every day. She never knows her lessons; and Mrs. Dunnell had to reprimand her for impudence the other day. But all the girls look up to her, and hang about her, and try to go with her. She has all the spending-money she wants, and she brings boxes and boxes of French candy and Mullane's to school, and gives to her set of girls. And she 's always throwing out spiteful remarks at me. One day, the very day that Don was hurt, she said to me at recess, right before all the girls, 'Nan Brown, what makes you wear that old blue cloth-dress to school all the time?'

"I said 'N'importe' (that's French for 'None of your business,' you know). Then she said, 'Girls, let's take up a subscription, and buy Nan Brown a new dress. I'm tired of seeing that old-fashioned thing.'

"I said, 'If you are so stylish, Lou Kibby, I don't think you're much of a lady.' Some of the girls laughed, and Lou turned red and said, 'Well, I would n't go to school at all, if I could n't dress at least decently. It's a disgrace to the school to have such a looking thing known as one of Mrs. Dunnell's girls.'

"I felt so badly I wanted to cry; but I would n't, because I would n't have her think I cared enough about it for that. One day, I happened to speak of making my bed, and all the girls exclaimed, 'Why, Nan Brown, do you have to make your own bed?'

"I said my mother thought that it taught girls to be neat, and to be good housekeepers by and by, if they were trained to take nice care of their own rooms.

"The girls all said that they never made a bed in their lives. Sue Smith, whose father is book-keeper for Lou's father, talked up loudest of any one; and Lou said, 'My mother would n't let me demean myself to do servants' work. She says she wants me to be a perfect lady.' 'That 's just what my mother says,' said Sue Smith.

"When this term began, all the girls were telling what they had for Christmas, and comparing presents, to see who had the most. They had gold watches and diamond rings and bracelets and everything you can think of, besides loads and loads of the most expensive candy. Lou Kibby had a diamond pin and solitaire ear-rings. When they asked me what I had, and I told, they all sneered and said, 'My, was that all?'

"I thought my presents were so nice, but the girls made me feel as if they were n't anything at all. Nearly every girl in school wears a diamond ring and a gold watch except me.

"But the worst thing happened this very week. Fanny Belding has always been one of my most intimate friends at school. We ate our lunch together, and worked out our problems together, and told each other all our secrets, and all that. And don't you believe, mother, Fanny Belding had a big party night before last, and asked every girl in school except the German teacher's daughter and me!

"I saw that she appeared changed, and avoided me; but I did n't suspect the reason, till the girls all began asking, 'Are you going to Fanny Belding's to-night, Nan?'

"Of course I had to say, 'No, I was n't invited.' Floss Remington told me that Fanny said, 'Nan Brown is a nice girl, but she does n't exactly belong to our set, you know; and I don't think she will expect to be invited.'

"I think it 's so awfully unkind! Of course I know papa would n't let me go anyway, but she might have asked me. Yesterday and to-day, the girls can't talk or think of anything else but the party, and what a splendid time they had. They danced the German, and they say the favors were perfectly elegant. They danced till one o'clock. Floss Remington spent the night with Nellie Clark, and she told me that they never went to sleep till four o'clock, talking it all over. I was the only girl in the class that knew the Latin lesson to-day; so we had to have it all over again. But the girls don't care. They get around Fanny at recess, and talk over their partners and their dresses and all about the party; and I'm an outsider. I'm an outsider in everything, mother; and you don't know how it makes a girl feel. I'm just as good a scholar, and have just as nice manners, and am just as good as the other girls in every way except my clothes. Won't papa let me go to some other school? Do ask him, please, mother!"

And Nan leaned against her mother, already relieved by having poured forth these sorrows to her, sure of her sympathy and help.

Mrs. Brown at first said nothing. In truth, rarely had she been so perplexed. She could see of how slight importance was this silly talk of ill-bred, empty-headed girls; but how should she make Nan see it? Some day Nan would look back at it all, and realize how trifling were these grievances that now seemed so dreadful; but at present the trouble was a real and very serious one to her.

"No, Nannie," she said, presently. "I don't think papa will let you change your school. Mrs. Dunnell is his old and valued friend, and he is willing to make sacrifices in order to give Celia and you the advantages of her teaching. You know papa believes in having his girls, as well as his boys, fitted to support themselves. He means you to have so good an education that, if he should die and our income stop, you would be able to teach and take care of yourself."

"I would take care of you too, mamma, and the baby," said Nan, giving her mother's hand a tender love-squeeze.

"Papa cannot afford to dress you in costly dresses, or buy you gold watches and diamond rings and ear-rings, even if he or I thought such things in good taste for school-girls, which we certainly do not. The really 'best' people — people of intelligence and refinement as well as of wealth — always dress their daughters plainly for school. Nothing is considered so vulgar, and speaks so plainly of shoddy and low breeding to such people, as an over-dressed school-girl."

"I know that, mother. Nora Hollenbeck dresses quite plainly, and wears hardly any jewelry to school. But then the Hollenbecks live out on that elegant place on the Grandin Road, and Nora comes to school in their carriage; so the girls think it is all right. They say the reason Nora dresses so, is because her mother is so eccentric."

"Mrs. Hollenbeck is a remarkably sensible woman. Possibly that does make her eccentric," said Mrs. Brown, speaking more to herself than to Nan. "Now, Nannie, the case is just this. It is best you should continue at Mrs. Dunnell's. I don't pretend that your trials there are of no consequence, or that I think it pleasant for you. I do not. I think them very hard trials for a little girl like you to bear. But as we go on in life, we often find that we have to bear disagreeable things because it is our duty; and the younger we begin, the easier it is. Don't you remember that small book with the long title in the Sunday-School Library that you and Don used to laugh about: 'Hard Things are Good for Folks?'

"Little as you believe it, this is true, provided the hard things are rightly borne. Last Sunday evening, when we were having our fireside talk about heroes and heroism, you said you should like to do some grand, heroic thing like Grace Darling, or Kate Shelley, — that brave girl in

Iowa who saved the express train from going through a broken bridge."

"Yes, I should like to do some great, grand thing," said Nan, her eyes shining, and her heart beating faster.

"Few of us have opportunities to save life, or do great, striking deeds that will make us famous. But we all have a chance to bear hard things bravely. I want you to go on at school, do your very best, and resolve not to care for these petty slights and persecutions. Bear them bravely, because it is your duty, and you too will be a little heroine. It requires more heroism, sometimes, to be brave under small trials that no one knows about, than to do one great deed that every one applauds. Will you try, Nannie?"

"Yes, mother, I will," said Nannie, almost eager now to be persecuted.

"And you may wear your best plaid dress to school now," said her mother, smiling at her own leap from high thoughts to the dress-question again. But she must make it as easy as possible for Nan. "I intended to buy you another dress long ago; but Don's accident drove everything else out of my head for the time. And to tell the truth, the parents of some of the very girls at school who dress so much, don't pay your father; so we have been rather short of money. Fine feathers don't always make fine birds, Miss Nan, as you will see some day. But Baby will be wondering what has become of me." And kissing Nan, Mrs. Brown left the room.

Nan felt so comforted by this talk with her mother. "Mother is *so* nice," she thought. "Now when I told Celia all about it, because I did n't want to bother mother when she was having such trouble with Don, Celia only laughed, and said, 'I wonder, Nan, that you can be foolish enough to pay the slightest attention to anything that such a girl as Lou Kibby thinks or says. It 's of no more consequence than the wind that blew last week. Let it blow. It does n't hurt any one.'

"Celia is so independent! She is the only girl in school that does n't bang her hair. Papa's friend Dr. Savage, who was here to dinner the other night, said that it was really refreshing to see a young lady with a forehead; and that brains as well as foreheads seemed to have gone out of fashion in these days. Then she 's one of the oldest girls in school, and Mrs. Dunnell says she 's such a superior girl; and the other girls are a little afraid of her, because she can say such cutting things. They say she 's so original. She always goes right ahead, and never cares what any one thinks. She does n't know how it feels to be just little, and not superior, and right in the midst of it all. But mother knows!"

CHAPTER VIII.

PREPARATIONS.

IF any one had told Don that a time was coming when he would actually be glad to go to school, he would certainly have been incredulous. Don learned easily, when he applied himself; but his natural restlessness and activity made the confinement of the school-room irksome to him. But Don had learned now that being obliged to attend school was far from being the worst misfortune that can befall a boy.

He grew so tired of being shut up in the house, that he even begged his father to let him go to school on crutches. But Dr. Brown said, "No, you'll certainly get your leg broken again, scuffling about in the school-yard among that crowd of boys."

He was finally allowed to go when able to walk with a cane. Some of the boys tried to laugh at him, and fasten the name of "Old Cripple" on him; but they soon learned that Don could use his cane in more ways than one, and was not too crippled to give lively chase, even if on a hobble. Miss Parsons seemed really glad to have him back again, which Don thought very good in her, considering; and after his long rest he took hold of his studies so vigorously that his next report promised to be very high.

Longfellow Day was near at hand. Don was busy preparing for that, and also for the long-postponed "theatre" which he and some of his friends proposed having soon in the Gym.

The theatre occupied all his spare time out of school; and his mother therefore considered it a blessing, and was willing to be bothered with the necessary preparations. In a city, anything that keeps a boy busy and off the street is a boon. There is no place for a boy to play outdoors but on the street; and once around the corner, he may be anywhere.

However busy or hurried Mrs. Brown might be, she was liable to such interruptions as this. Don rushes up stairs into the sitting-room, a big bundle under his arm, his face, hands, and clothes grimy from crawling about among the sooty beams of the Gym, all excitement, shouting, "Mother, can't you find us an old sheet or something for a curtain?"

"Not so loud, Don. I'm sitting right here, you see. Perhaps you thought I was across the street," said his mother, smiling. "I thought that I gave you an old spread yesterday for the curtain."

"Yes, you did. This is it, but it is n't half long enough. You've no idea how big our stage is going to be."

Mrs. Brown went upstairs and found a sheet.

"Now, Celia," said Don, coaxingly, "won't you just run 'em together for us on the machine? It won't take you a minute hardly, you know."

At first Celia frowned, and said nothing. Then her face cleared, and she said pleasantly, "Yes, I will. Let me take it."

This was better luck than Don expected. Celia used always to say, to similar requests, "No. Go away, Don, and don't bother me. I'm busy."

Celia was always in a hurry. She was ambitious, full of plans and purposes, and prone to pile up more work ahead of herself than she could possibly accomplish. This afternoon she was hurrying to finish her French exercise. If she could finish it by half-past four, after she had practised an hour there would still be a half hour or so left before dinner, when she could at least partly copy a lovely design for Kensington work that Maud Wasson had loaned her. She had not one moment to spare.

Among Celia's Christmas presents had been a fine, gilt-edged diary. Celia was keeping her first diary this year with much enthusiasm. It was full of the most beautiful sentiments. If Celia could only have lived up to her diary! But perhaps it helped her a little to have even felt these sentiments long enough to write them down.

Just as she was about to snap out at Don, "No, I can't be bothered with your nonsense. I'm hurried to death. I can't stop a minute for anything," a passage written lately in the diary suddenly flashed into her mind: "I *will* try to overcome my dreadful temper and my selfishness. I *will* make myself do disagreeable things pleasantly for other people, when

I don't want to. I will *especially* try to be kind and pleasant to Don, and not let him provoke me."

So Celia sewed the curtain. After all, it only took five minutes; and Don was so pleased that he said, "Thanks. You 're a jolly sister, Cele, a regular trump."

"Don't use slang, Don," said Celia mildly, not displeased however with the compliment.

The next night, Don came in and said to his mother, with an air of mystery most aggravating to Nan, who was not admitted to these high confidences, "Mother, will you please come into your room a minute? I want to ask you something."

Mother's room was always the place for secrets and confidences. Mrs. Brown followed Don, who, after closing the door carefully, said in a stage whisper, "Now don't you tell Nan, mother. We 're going to act Buffalo Bill, and —"

"Buffalo Bill?" asked Mrs. Brown, doubtfully.

"Why, yes. I wanted to act 'Uncle Tom's Cabin.' The boys said the blacking up would be jolly, but that 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' was nothing at all compared to Buffalo Bill. Every boy

I know has been to see Buffalo Bill, and I think father might let me go. Bill Schraider says if he was in my place he 'd go anyway, — with my own money."

"Who is Bill Schraider, Don?"

"He 's the biggest boy in our room. He did n't pass last spring, so he had to stay in our room another year. He 's almost a man. He smokes and chews and is n't afraid of anything. At any rate, he says he is n't. He says if old Lathrup ever tries to thrash him, he 'll find out what he 'll get."

"Is he a nice boy, Don?"

"Well, I don't know. I suppose you and father would n't think he was."

"I suspect not, Don."

"But then he 's so smart! I wish I was as smart as he is."

"What does he do that is so smart? It seems he is a poor scholar."

"Yes, that 's so. Little girls not half his size can do problems that he can't; and you ought to hear him read! But he says — "

"I don't ask what he says, Don. Tell me what he has done."

Don tried hard, but to his surprise could not recall anything in the least remarkable that Bill had ever done, with all his boasting. He was always bullying the little boys in the schoolyard; but Don could not remember his ever having fought a boy his own size, — much less one larger. His hero suddenly shrank in his esteem.

"Whose opinion is probably worth the most, Don, Bill Schraider's or father's?"

"Why father's, of course. But," said Don, who, feeling that his mother was getting the better of him in argument, was anxious to change the subject, "may n't we act Buffalo Bill, mother? Jake Bloch is going to be Buffalo Bill, because he 's the oldest; and besides, he 's been to see it three times. The rest of us are going to be Indians. I want you to make me a scalp or two, mother, out of some old hair; and won't you please sew some red fringe down the sides of my pantaloons, and on my old coat? You can cut up some red flannel or something for fringe. I 'll show you just how I want it."

The next morning being Saturday, Nan, whose curiosity was wrought to a high pitch to see the theatrical preparations and learn what was going on, appeared in her gymnasium costume.

Dr. Brown encouraged Nan's exercising in the gymnasium in proper ways and at proper times. There were parallel bars, an acting pole, a swing that took you high up among the rafters under the roof, a large rope to swing and pull on, light dumb-bells, Indian clubs, and bean-bags. Nan's pride was to do everything that Don did, determined that he should not be able to look down upon her because she was "only a girl," and did things in girls' ways. She was running over with vigor and life, and found in the wild play and games, in the swinging and leaping, the healthy outlet her activity could not otherwise have had in a city, where there are, alas! no blessed fences to climb, no wild flowers to pick, no woods to ramble in, no haycocks to tumble over, — no anything that children like.

Dr. Brown said he saw so many sickly, nervous, half-alive women in his practice, that he wanted his girls to have good health and strong constitutions above everything else. He brought Mrs. Popple out to see the gymnasium one day.

He had recommended something similar for Pinkie Popple, who was threatened with St. Vitus's dance.

Pinkie was a pale, languid little creature, — Nan's age, but not half her size, — with blue circles under her eyes, who could n't eat, could n't sleep, could n't sit still, and was always tired. She had always been allowed to eat all the candy she pleased, sit up as late nights as she pleased, go to theatres and matinées whenever she pleased, — her mother's one strictness being that under no circumstances must she injure her clothes, always of the most fashionable and expensive kind. If Pinkie ever had life enough to attempt playing, her mother cried, "Oh, Pinkie, do be careful! Sit still. You 'll ruin your dress."

Nan and Don were playing in the gymnasium the day the Doctor brought Mrs. Popple out. They were tossing bean-bags, shouting and laughing so loudly that they heard no one coming. As Mrs. Popple's head rose above the staircase, a flying bean-bag grazed its plumes too nearly to be pleasant.

She gazed in ill-concealed horror and dismay at Nan, in her gymnasium suit, her hair flying and her face not over-clean, but glowing with healthy exercise and fun. Nan came forward and spoke very prettily, when her father introduced her to Mrs. Popple, with the natural ease and grace of one who is quite free from self-consciousness or embarrassment about dress.

"A little soap and water and a change of dress soon convert this wild gypsy into a civilized young lady again, Mrs. Popple. And Nan never has known a sick day in her life, except the inevitable mumps and measles. You should see the food she disposes of. Something of this sort, Mrs. Popple, and a return to natural, simple habits of life — 'early to bed and early to rise' — will soon give your Pinkie as plump, rosy cheeks as Nan's here, and as big an appetite."

Mrs. Popple said, coldly, "I prefer sending Pinkie to dancing-school for exercise."

"Dancing-schools, nowadays, are mere hotbeds of dress and flirtation," exclaimed the Doctor, warmly.

To dancing-school, however, Pinkie nevertheless went; and the next summer her mother took her to Saratoga for her health, where Pinkie shone at the delightful children's hops at the hotels, — often having her dress described in full in the papers. But these triumphs were suddenly brought to an untimely end by a collapse in Pinkie's health. When, after a year or two's struggle to build up again the weakened constitution, she finally died, Mrs. Popple felt that she had been misused by "Providence."

This, it must be admitted, is a digression from our subject, and from the Browns' dining-room, where, when Mrs. Brown entered this Saturday morning, she found Don and Nan warmly disputing.

"Mother," burst out Nan, "may n't I go out to the Gym this morning? I have n't exercised for ever so long. Don says I sha'n't go."

"She never would have thought of exercising if it had n't been for our theatre. It 's just curiosity. She wants to pry into our affairs."

"Don and his friends have the Gym all the time, and it is n't fair."

"I think, Nan," said her mother, "that you must wait until the performance is over. It comes next week. You will see it all then, and after that you shall have your fair share of the Gym."

Don looked triumphant, and Nan as if about to cry, when a ring at the door-bell diverted their attention. Don went to the door, and returned bearing a square envelope addressed to "Miss Nannie Brown and brother."

"A swell colored man brought it," said Don. "He had a basket-full."

Every one wondered what it could be, and Nan enjoyed her importance as she drew out the card, on which was inscribed,

MISS ROSE BARRETT,

AT HOME,

Friday, from Eight to Ten, P. M.

Nan jumped up and down for joy. "Rose told me she was going to have a large party, but I did not know that it was coming so soon. She wanted to surprise me. It 's going to be a splendid party, with refreshments by Becker, and a band of music, and everything just like a grown-up party. Oh, I 'm so glad!"

"But, Nannie dear," said her mother, "don't set your heart on it so strongly. You know your father disapproves of evening parties for children. We must ask him first, and perhaps he will say no."

"I shall *die* if I can't go; I know I shall!" cried Nan.

"Don't use such exaggerated language, my child," said her mother. "You will still continue to live, I presume, even if you don't go to the party. Don't you think so?"

"I suppose I shall," said Nan, doubtfully. "But I shall be dreadfully disappointed."

"That sounds more probable. I will talk it over with papa and see what he says."

Nan took courage, feeling that mother was on her side, and having great hopes from her talk with papa.

Don was understood to be the "brother" of the invitation. Don poohed, affected indifference, and said he did n't know whether he should go or not; but he was secretly much pleased.

Rose Barrett was a new scholar, who had come to Mrs. Dunnell's soon after Nan's talk with her mother about her various trials there. She and Rose were bosom friends, and Nan's school-life was much happier now. Since she had resolved to be independent, and not mind what Lou Kibby and the rest said about her dress, they had made fewer criticisms, finding, perhaps, less pleasure in so doing, since it had ceased to tease Nan. And Rose Barrett's friendship had doubtless helped raise Nan in the other girls' eyes; although she was just the same Nan she had always been.

For Mrs. Barrett had also just returned from "abroad," and Rose wore Parisian dresses,—Worth's, it was even whispered among the girls. But Rose never seemed to think or care about her clothes. They were simply a part of herself, and that was all. She was as sweet and natural as a bird or a flower,—indeed, her face made you think of a flower,—a girlish girl, with a sunny, joyous disposition, overflowing with life and vivacity. Every one liked Rose, old people as well as young. She had that respectful, deferential manner towards older people, not invariably found in young Americans, but always recognized as peculiarly graceful and becoming when seen.

It was sometimes a difficult matter to catch Dr. Brown long enough to hold a consultation on family matters. Nan "died" several times before her mother contrived to have the promised talk with her father.

At first, he poohed and pished, and wondered that such a sensible woman as Mrs. Barrett would do anything so ruinously foolish — not to say criminal — as to give a large evening-party for children.

"To be sure, I ought not to complain," he said. "It 's certain to bring me plenty of business!"

But finally, in consideration of Nan's intimacy with Rose, and the fact that Rose was such a nice girl, and that Nan had not been to a party all winter, and would n't ask to go to another "for ever and ever so long," he was induced to give a reluctant consent. And Nan gave herself up to joyous anticipations of the great event.

"If Nan only enjoys half she anticipates," said her mother to Celia, "she will have happiness enough."

CHAPTER IX.

THE PARTY.

WHEN Nan came downstairs dressed for the party, with her pretty white dress standing out almost like the fairy's in a pantomime, a cluster of pink rosebuds in her sash, her curly light hair flying down her shoulders like that same fairy's, her cheeks rosy, her eyes large and shining with eagerness, she was really a very pleasing object to look upon.

"Does n't she look sweet?" said Celia, who had been acting as Nan's dressing-maid.

"We must n't turn Nan's head with compliments," said her mother. "I hope she will behave like the little lady she looks."

"Yes, handsome is that handsome does," said Dr. Brown. "If you behave as well as you look, little girl, you 'll do well enough."

But papa's and mamma's eyes gave far higher compliments than their tongues, as they looked with loving pride at their little daughter.

"You look pretty well for you, Nan," said Don, secretly feeling that he had no reason to be ashamed of his sister.

But any lack of compliments upstairs was fully compensated for when Nan went down into the kitchen to show herself in all her glory to Bridget. Bridget said that she was as sweet as a pink, and as pretty as a picture, and she was sure there would n't be any one at the party prettier or nicer than "our little girl," and so on.

The Barretts' large house was all ablaze with light, and the music of the band floated out delightfully, as the stately colored man opened the door, and waved them impressively upstairs. They had a glimpse of the long drawing-room, its carpets covered with white cloth for dancing. A great basket overflowing with lovely hot-house flowers stood on the newel-post, and flowers were massed on the mantel-pieces and in every effective place. From behind a covert of tropical plants in the hall, where Currier's band was stationed, came the enticing strains of a Strauss waltz.

The music, the flower-perfume, the gleam and glitter of it all, put Nan's heart in a delightful flutter.

"O Don!" she exclaimed, "isn't it gorgeous?"

But Don was beginning to feel painfully shy and uncomfortable, and more than half-wished he had not come.

In the dressing-room several of Nan's schoolmates were removing their wraps. They had attended too many parties to be at all excited. They appeared quite like finished society ladies, much as if they had been their own mothers. They were calm and critical, running their eyes over the dress of each new-comer that entered the room. Certainly Solomon in all his glory never outshone these young misses. Such intricate marvels of delicate silk and tulle, velvet, lace, and what not, Nan's eyes had never before beheld.

Lou Kibby nodded condescendingly. "Oh, are you here, Nan Brown? How d' ye do?"

Then she whispered something to the other girls, at which they all giggled. Nan felt them eying disparagingly the poor little white dress that had seemed so pretty at home. And pink rosebuds made but a feeble display compared to diamonds. Then the dressing-maid was so lofty and superior.

Altogether, Nan's high spirits were decidedly dampened; and she felt almost as solemn and uncomfortable as Don looked, when she joined him in the hall to go downstairs.

But Rose ran joyfully to meet her at the very entrance of the drawing-room.

"Oh, my dearest Nan, I'm so glad you've come! I was so afraid your father might change his mind, and keep you at home, after all!"

Mrs. Barrett welcomed her so pleasantly too, and was so much more affable than the dressing-maid upstairs, that Nan's spirits rose, and she felt once more happy and at ease.

"I won't care for Lou Kibby and those girls," she thought, bravely, "nor think about my dress at all. I'll just go ahead, and do the best I can, and have the best time I can."

Don joined the other boys, who stood massed together in a black group at one side of the room, — every boy of them wishing himself at home. At the other side of the room were the girls, whispering and giggling, and looking across at the boys. The band continued to play the most enticing waltzes; the girls, unable to stand still, tapped their dainty slippers in time to the music; but not a boy ventured to cross the yawning gulf between, and be the first one to ask a girl to dance.

Finally Mrs. Barrett directed the band to play for the Virginia Reel, and insisted that every one should take part; and once started, there was no more trouble in getting the young people to dance, although she had constantly to guard against the tendency of the boys to go off by themselves.

One of Dr. Brown's favorite aversions was the large city dancing-school, with its closing "soirée dansante," to which the next day's paper devotes a column of fine print such as this:

> "Miss Pinkie Pettitoes — a miniature belle of four summers, a most charming petite blonde — was exquisitely lovely in tulle over blue silk, and won all hearts by the grace and finished ease with which she, etc."

Mrs. Brown had therefore been only too glad to send Don and Nan to a private dancing-class which Mrs. Wetmore, a lady who agreed with Dr. Brown's views of the modern dancing-school, had Professor Panier hold Saturday afternoons in her large double parlors, for the benefit of her own children and a few of the neighbors'.

Don and Nan both danced well. After Don was warmed to the work, and had forgotten his first shyness and embarrassment, he enjoyed himself immensely. Being a handsome boy, bright and full of fun, he was popular with the girls, who wondered they never knew before that Nan Brown had such a delightful brother.

As for Nan, she was, unconsciously to herself, quite a belle, in a small way. She was wholly free from smirky, self-conscious airs and ways. Nor was she already half blasé and exhausted. Perfect happiness shone in her eyes, and glowed in her face, as she floated on the music as lightly and easily as a thistle-down on the breeze.

A few ladies and gentlemen, particular friends of Mrs. Barrett, were present as spectators.

"Who is that little girl in white, dancing with your Bradley?" asked Mrs. Hollenbeck.

"That is Dr. Brown's daughter Nannie, — a great friend of Rose."

"What a charming child! She certainly does credit to the Doctor's theories, which poor Mrs.

Popple says are 'so queer.' 'A second Abernethy' she pronounces the Doctor."

And Mr. Barrett said to his wife, "Do see that child enjoy herself! It is really refreshing to see a natural, child-like child again. I thought, excepting our Rose, such children were an extinct species, — gone out with the dodos."

With the native independence peculiar to their sex and age, the boys to-night admired "that pretty, jolly little Brown girl," and Nan was never without a partner. In the midst of her own gayety, Nan noticed Katrina Schuster sitting dolefully alone, not dancing at all, with no one talking to her.

Katrina's father was a German minister, who added to his small income by teaching German at Mrs. Dunnell's. Katrina was an intelligent, refined child, but dressed in an odd, foreign fashion that gave her the look of a premature old woman.

"If there is n't Katrina Schuster!" Lou Kibby had exclaimed. "Is n't it just like Rose Barrett to ask her? Rose is *so* queer. I don't care, I sha'n't take any notice of her. Such people ought to be taught their place."

And so schoolmates of Katrina, without a tithe of her brains or culture, deliberately ignored her, and made her feel herself an intruder.

Nan liked Katrina, and her kind heart was moved with sympathy for her. Mrs. Barrett was so occupied in another room that she had not noticed Katrina's forlorn position; and Rose — who was not vulgar and selfish, only young and thoughtless — was enjoying herself so much that she did not think about Katrina.

But Nan had suffered herself. She knew how it felt to be on the outside of things, — to be "a stranger" and not "taken in." She sought out Don, stated the case to him, and asked him to dance with Katrina.

"She dances beautifully, Don; and she loves music so, it's a perfect shame she isn't dancing."

Don was good-natured and kind-hearted. Moreover, Nan had sometimes confided her school-trials and experiences to him. So he said, "All right. I'll dance with her. I don't care for her toggery. I'd dance with her, any way, just to spite your dear friend Lou Kibby."

So he danced with Katrina, and found her a pleasant partner, who danced as if born to it.

Supper being announced, he took her out into the dining-room, where she entertained him greatly by descriptions of life in Germany, her voyage over, etc., increasing Don's desire to travel by her bright, interesting description of her experiences.

Nan and Don had been allowed to attend the party only under a solemn promise to their father that they would eat nothing but ice-cream and cake. They felt obliged to keep their promise, although Don, especially, thought that his father was altogether too particular, as he saw boys and girls all around him drinking coffee, devouring chicken salad, croquettes, oyster patties, and sweetbreads.

Although the invitations read "from eight to ten," the children, excepting the offspring of the too particular Dr. Brown, and a few others, stayed until midnight.

"Did you have a good time?" asked Celia, sleepily, half-waking as Nan came in.

"Perfectly splendid! The best time I ever had in my life!" replied Nan.

CHAPTER X.

DON "SPEAKS IN PUBLIC ON THE STAGE."

IT was Longfellow Day in the Cincinnati public schools. Superintendent Peaslee had introduced the pleasant custom of observing the poets' birthdays in the schools, — a custom not only pleasant, but profitable. Children became interested in our poets, who otherwise might hardly have heard of them. After "Whittier Day," for instance, a greatly increased demand for his works is noticed at libraries and book stores. And something is certainly gained when a boy or girl takes home Whittier's poems to read, rather than "Rip Roarer, the Red Ranger of the Rockies," or "Lily Lilac's Lovers."

Don was full of excitement. He was, as has been said, a fine reader and speaker, and one always likes to do what he knows he can do well. He had rehearsed "The Old Clock on the Stairs" in the privacy of the Gym early and late, so earnestly and loudly that the little colored boys on Van Horn Street, who caught glimpses of Don's gestures against the cross-lights of the windows and heard his vociferations, spread a report that Dr. Brown had a crazy patient confined in the room over his stable, and enjoyed the delights of frightening each other by shouting, as they scampered away, "Look out! The crazy man 's coming!"

Mrs. Brown and Nan went to hear Don speak. The school-room was gay with pictures, flags, and flowers. From the most prominent place, the face of the "good gray" poet looked kindly down on the children. Mrs. Brown, from her place of honor on the platform, looking over the school-room, was struck, as often before, with the truly democratic equality that reigned there. Side by side sat the children from brown-stone fronts and the children from cellars and alleys, — all equal so far as school privileges go, each standing solely on his own merit and ability. If the millionnaire's son is stupid and lazy, the bright, studious Irish or German boy outranks him, and sits in seat No. 1, while the other must content himself with seat No. 21.

The exercises opened with a sketch of Longfellow's life. Then the superintendent made a short address, closing by reading a pleasant letter written by the poet himself to the school-children of Cincinnati. Then followed readings and recitations of his poems by the pupils.

Mrs. Brown noticed with sympathy the faces, at first anxious, then beaming with ill-disguised pride, of certain mothers in blanket-shawls, whose boys and girls, neatly if poorly dressed, won applause by the excellence of their speaking. Such boys and girls often, as the years go on, come to the top elsewhere than in the public schools, in our blessed America, where every one has a chance if he will only use it. And mothers' love is the same, under sealskin cloaks or blanket-shawls.

When Don's time to speak came, it was Mrs. Brown's turn to have her heart beat fast, at first with anxiety, then with loving pride. Don's hair was brushed back from his forehead ; his eyes shone ; the best and noblest qualities in him were uppermost, and transfigured his whole face and bearing.

Mrs. Brown could hardly believe her own

ears. Was this her Don, her heedless, harum-scarum, "good, bad boy," as she sometimes called him, whose earnest voice rang through the crowded room, so breathlessly still now, as the audience were swayed at Don's will by the touching words of the poet?

Don had never felt like this before. In truth, he experienced something of the orator's joy. He could feel the thrill go from his heart through the hearts of the audience, as in solemn tones that rose and fell with a pathos — a real eloquence that surprised himself, that came he knew not whence — he repeated:

"All are scattered now, and fled,
Some are married, some are dead;
And when I ask, with throbs of pain,
'Ah! when shall they all meet again?'
As in the days long since gone by,
The ancient timepiece makes reply,
'Forever — never!
Never — forever!'"

A glorious sense of power thrilled him. He felt as if he would like to be a minister, a great orator, that he might sway and lead people at his will. Edward Everett, Daniel Webster, Wendell Phillips, were once only public-school boys. And

Don's heart beat fast with its first dawning dreams of ambition, as he took his seat amid tumultuous applause, and saw people whispering, and asking, "Who is that boy?"

Mrs. Brown tried not to look as proud and happy as she felt, while Nan's radiant face would have made vain any pretence of concealing her feelings, as she whispered to her mother, "Was n't it grand! Are n't you proud of him, mother?"

In the seat ranking lowest sat Bill Schraider, a coarse, hulky fellow, with a bullet head, low, retreating forehead, and a mean eye that dodged, — never met another's frankly and squarely. He affected to sneer at proceedings in which he had no part. One looking from his repulsive face to the sweet, refined countenance of Don's mother might have fancied they represented the good and bad in Don, — the uplifting and down-pulling influences in his life. For, incredible as it seemed, on some points Bill's influence with Don was stronger, and his opinion more respected, than his mother's.

That night Mrs. Brown gave the Doctor a glowing account of Don's success.

"Yes, there is no question that Don is a boy of good, perhaps great, possibilities," said his father. "He will come to something, I think, if he does n't throw his life away for pleasure, for what he thinks 'good times.' All he needs is to get the idea of duty planted in his head; to put 'ought' first."

The next day being Saturday, the long-talked-of theatre at last took place in the Gym. Nan and others of the sisters, with the little brothers too small to take the parts they pined for, occupied reserved seats on boards laid across chairs, where they sat, watching impatiently for the curtain to rise. Behind the curtain was a great noise of moving things about, shuffling feet, loud whispering, and laughing.

"I believe they mean to keep all the fun to themselves," said Sheba Bloch, a pretty, black-eyed Jewish girl, whose brother Jacob was one of the chief actors.

The audience clapped impatiently, and at last the curtain rose, revealing a band of blood-thirsty Indians, blue-eyed, brown-eyed, gray-eyed Indians, who grinned through their fire-red paint in a friendly way calculated to dispel the terrors of the audience.

"Dear me, don't they look fierce! I am really afraid of them!" said the admiring audience.

The Indians' hair was tied on the top of their heads in genuine scalp-locks, and decorated with hens' feathers obtained from the good-natured butcher around the corner; the red paint on their faces brought out the whites of their eyes with startling distinctness; long red fringe trimmed their garments, and in their red sashes were thrust long wooden daggers, and the home hatchets, usually used for the peaceful purpose of splitting kindlings, but now figuring as tomahawks.

To this blood-thirsty band enters Buffalo Bill, attired much like the Indians, only he wears a broad-brimmed sombrero, and a long false moustache. The Indians, with a terrific, ear-splitting yell, supposed to be a war-whoop, that makes frightened Baby Brown clutch Nan closely, fall on the redoubtable Bill in a body, and the battle rages fiercely.

Now the girls are frightened with good reason, expecting to see some one's head split open, as the hatchets flourish wildly about in the crowd.

But the accidents that every one prophesies for boys rarely happen, luckily, or few indeed would be the boys living to grow up. So no one was hurt, and the redoubtable Bill easily laid low his foes, one and all. The dying of the Indians was something wonderful.

"They fall just as flat, — as flat as anything!" exclaimed Nina Burgess, as Indian after Indian slammed full length on the floor and lay motionless under the heel of the conqueror. "How can they do it? I should think it would nearly kill them."

"Oh, they 've been practising it all winter," said Nan. "One night, when Don first began, he frightened father and mother dreadfully. Soon after he went up to bed, they heard him fall heavily on the floor, and then groan awfully. 'Don 's in a fit!' cried mother, and she and father ran upstairs as fast as they could; to find Don just picking himself up. 'What *is* the matter?' they both asked together. 'Are you sick?' 'Oh, no, I 'm only dying,' said Don, rubbing his head. At first he was covered with black-and-blue spots; but now he says it does n't hurt at all, hardly, he 's so used to it."

As soon as the curtain fell on this scene of carnage, Nan and the baby disappeared behind it; and Harry Eckert (his paint partly washed off) appeared to announce, "The leading Infant Phenomenon of the World, in her Great Act of Pippin Hill!"

The curtain, rising, disclosed Don, in a tall hat and long coat which belonged to his father, advancing from one side of the stage to meet Baby, dressed in a long Kate Greenaway dress and cunning red poke-hat, fashioned for the occasion by Celia. With much visible pushing and prompting from Nan at the side, Baby was induced to lisp:

"As I was going up Pippin Hill,
Pippin Hill was dirty;
There I met a pretty lass,
And she dropped me a courtesy."

Don took off his hat, and made a ceremonious bow to the floor, and Baby held up her long dress daintily, made a cunning, bashful little courtesy, then ran back and hid her face on Nan's shoulder at the loud applause which followed.

Walter Holmes, who owned a real Punch-and-

Judy show, had been induced to add this to the other attractions. In such a funny tone did he squeak, "Judy, where 's the baby, Judy?" that the unfortunate families of the boys present heard little else but this query, in all varieties of squeak, for a week after.

Next was announced, "Wonderful Feats of the World-Renowned Gymnast Brothers, Rudolph and Rudolphus," whose names in private life were Jacob Bloch and Harry Eckert.

The boys turned double somersaults, swung from the rope, and revolved on the parallel bars so actively as to merit Nan's well-meant compliment, "Don't they act just like the monkeys at the Zoo!"

Finally, Jacob went up on the step-ladder to perform his great act of leaping from its top to the acting pole, — a feat none of the other boys could perform, although several had nearly broken their necks in hopeless rivalry of Jacob's daring.

The step-ladder was an old one, weak and tottling. It is safe to say that Dr. Brown was not aware of its use in this way. As Jacob, on its very top, was about to make his famous leap, it doubled up, and down the staircase below crashed step-ladder, Jacob, and all.

The girls screamed, "Oh, he 's killed! He 's killed!"

The boys flew to pick up Jacob, while his sister Sheba ran home crying, to tell her mother that Jacob was killed; and soon Jacob's mother, aunt, and older sisters came running down bareheaded, creating a great excitement on the street, and wild rumors of the death of an unknown number of boys in the Browns' gymnasium.

Jacob was carried insensible into the Browns' house. A crowd of silent, sober-looking children stood about outside, waiting to know their playfellow's fate. Jacob, being a boy, was not killed, as any one else would have been by such a fall. When revived, his most serious injury, aside from the general shock, was found to be a sprained wrist. But this ended abruptly the theatrical season in the Browns' gymnasium.

The chief effect of these triumphs was to leave a doubt in Don's mind as to his future career. Once he had been certain he should be a railroad engineer or conductor, beginning as a train-boy and "working up." Now he wavered between being a famous minister, a second Daniel Webster, or a second Edwin Booth, inclining most strongly to the latter.

When he discussed with his mother the stage as a profession, she annoyed him by saying, "To be a third or fourth rate actor is the poorest business possible, Don. It means hard work, a hard life full of shifts and uncertainties, poor pay, drifting about the world in low company, — too often being a low, dissipated fellow yourself."

Third or fourth rate actor indeed! Much mother knew about it! Of course he meant to be a Booth or an Irving, if he were an actor at all.

It did not occur to Don that among the thousands of actors now living, all of whom probably once cherished dreams of greatness, there is only one Booth, one Irving.

CHAPTER XI.

THE ZOO.

ONE Saturday morning, soon after breakfast, Don was engaged in the congenial task known to him as "squirting off the pavement." Don's Saturday pavement-cleaning was an interesting event to all the boys up and down Seventh Street. Before he had the hose fastened to the hydrant, a crowd of boys usually gathered about, eager to help. Don enjoyed the "squirting" much better than the scrubbing. He was therefore quite willing to economize his own labor by letting his friends do the scrubbing, in exchange for the privilege of handling the hose a few minutes.

This morning Don threatened to prolong his task indefinitely. It was one of those delightful mornings in early spring, that go far to compensate dwellers in Cincinnati for summer heats and winter floods. So soft and genial is the sweet spring air, so summer-like the warmth, that people feel unreasonably happy and hopeful, and devise excuses for loitering outdoors. The maid dawdles on the steps with her broom; the butcher-boy lingers, basket on shoulder, to watch the boys playing marbles; shop-keepers stand in their doors and chat with policemen and postmen, who also are in no hurry.

So perhaps it was no wonder that Don also dawdled. He threw fountains high in the air, and dashed floods all over the window-panes, where Baby's face shone out full of glee at the pretty water sparkling and flashing in the sunlight and her funny brother's funny performances. Then he dropped the hose on the pavement, sending a sudden flood across it, to the evident discomfort of passers-by, and scrubbed a few moments. A street-car came along, and Don could not resist trying to throw over it. Then some small boys ran near and dared him to hit them, scampering away; but Don was too spry, and gave them a good ducking, to his and their equal delight. Then Don wondered if he could hit the lamp-post down on the corner; missed it, but hit the policeman instead, who, however, feeling, perhaps, something of the morning's pleasantness in his own soul, condescended to accept Don's profuse apologies, with dark warnings not to do it again.

The scrubbing was thus progressing but slowly. Don was short of help this morning. "Kite time" had come, and the boys were all busy. All over the city, from every telegraph-wire and tree-branch dangled wrecks of bright-hued kites, — each one representing a grievous loss to some boy. Don had a fine large kite in the house. He had begun to tire of playing with the water, and to think, "I believe I shall have to go to work and do this miserable old scrubbing myself, so I can fly my kite," when his ears were greeted by a joyful "Hullo, Don!"

Karl Kline was coming down the street, a basket in his hand. Karl was a curly-haired German boy, as full of play and well-meant mischief as it was possible for a boy to be. He and Don were great friends.

"Hullo yourself!" responded Don, dropping his broom. "Where are you going, Karl?"

"Out to the Hollenbeck Woods, wild-flowering. Going to spend the whole day. I've come for you to go too. Hurry up, and get your lunch, and let's be off."

"I've got to scrub this old pavement."

"Well, get another broom, and I'll help you."

The boys went to work with a will, and the shining red bricks soon threw all the neighbors' pavements into the shade. Mrs. Brown knew that Karl, even if a little impulsive, was a clean-mouthed, clean-hearted boy, and she was only too glad to have Don in the country all day. So she put him up a large lunch, gave him car-tickets enough for the round trip, and fifteen cents.

"Probably you won't need this money, Don; but I give it to you in case some emergency should arise that I don't foresee. Don't spend it except in an emergency, Don."

"No, ma'am," said Don, already off.

Nan stood mournfully in the door, in the pleasant sunshine, looking enviously after the boys as they went whooping and running up the street.

"I wish I were a boy," she said. "Boys have so much more fun than girls. Girls have to stay at home and work, while boys are off enjoying themselves."

"Every dog has his day, Nan," said her mother. "Yours will come, too."

But Nan refused to smile at her mother's familiar philosophy.

"I don't care, I don't think it's half fair," she muttered.

Nan had been obliged to practise ever since breakfast, when the spring morning seemed calling to her, "Come outdoors and enjoy yourself! Don't waste time working!"

Worse than all, her mother had just said, "Nan, won't you take Baby out awhile this morning? It's such a nice air for her, and I want to clean some bureau drawers without the help of her busy little fingers."

Nan had planned to run over to Rose Barrett's when she had finished practising. The Barretts had a large yard for the city, and Rose had told her that she was going to put out the croquet set this morning, and urged her to come over. And now to have to stay at home, and take care of the baby!

Nan loved her little sister dearly, excepting sometimes when she had to take care of her. She tied on the dainty cap and buttoned the tiny coat with such rough twitches, saying so crossly, "Stand still a minute, can't you, you naughty little thing!" that poor Baby would certainly have cried, had she not been so overjoyed to get outdoors again, after all the dreary cold and wet days that had kept her shut up in the house so long.

Nan walked with her up and down their own pavement. Who so happy as Baby now, enjoying the pleasant air and sunshine, the horse-cars, dogs, carriages, scissors-grinders, — all the interesting street sights and sounds! All the babies had come out with the wild flowers, and the sunny side of the street was abloom with the dimpled faces of the little ones, — some rolling along in state in their carriages, some toddling beside their nurses. Baby Brown exchanged with them the dignified stare with which babies regard each other; but reserved her intimacy for a friendly little dog who came hopping and frisking about her, to her great delight. She and doggie understood each other, and were friends at once.

It is difficult to keep ill-tempered when all is sunshine and brightness about you. So Nan found it. Insensibly her ill-humor oozed away, until finally she had the grace to be ashamed of it.

"Oh dear, I wish I were n't so mean and selfish!" she thought, with an impatient sigh.

But these musings were interrupted by little Tommy Renfrew, who ran breathlessly up to Nan, all excitement.

"My kite 's been where you never were, Nan."

"Where 's that, Tommy?"

"Way up in the sky, out of sight!"

"Where is it now?" for Tommy's hands were empty.

"In a tree-top. I was running hard as I could, and it was going up splendidly, just as I came to those big trees, corner of Baymiller Street. A wagon was coming that I did n't see, and the horses were almost on me, when the man hollered, and I had either to lose my kite, or lose myself. But I 've been home for a cent, and I 'm going to buy another one, right away."

The street was all fluttering with kites, — little kites that little boys dragged at their heels, fondly thinking that they were flying them, and the great kites of the masters, that soared far up into the sky, tugging and straining at the string like living creatures that would fain break the tie dragging them back to earth. Who that sees a boy lost to all surroundings, oblivious of danger, holding the string that controls that fluttering, soaring creature far up in the blue zenith, knows the fancies that fill his soul, as he soars in spirit with his kite?

Nan was so fascinated with watching the kites that she forgot Baby, who improved the opportunity to dig in a pile of sand and earth before the new house that was building next door. She took to playing in it as instinctively as a duckling to the water.

"Pitty, pitty," said Baby softly to herself, sprinkling the nice earth all over herself from two grimy little hands. Nan came down from the clouds to find her half buried alive. When she told her father about it, he said, "Poor Baby! I must have a load of clean sand drawn into the back yard for her to dig in. The child's education must n't be neglected because we live in a city."

Nan might have yielded to the temptation to scold Baby, as she brushed off the dirt, if Rose

Barrett had not come running up just then, so out of breath that she could hardly speak.

"Oh, Nannie! Mother's going to take us all out to the Zoo. She wants Celia and the baby to go, too. Hurry and see if you can go, for mother will be around with the carriage in a few minutes."

Nan was overjoyed, and carried Baby into the house by main force, to be cleaned, while she hastened to tell Celia. Celia, who was considerably older and wiser at fifteen than she would be ten years later, usually chose to consider the Zoo beneath her dignity.

"Oh, do go! won't you, Celia?" teased Nan. "We shall have such fun, — the nice drive and everything! Oh, it's too good to be true!"

"Your day has come already, you see, Nan," said her mother.

"I know it. But I did n't expect anything so pleasant as this would happen to me to-day."

"That's just it," said her mother. "It's the unexpected that happens, you know. For that reason, we ought never to let the present either depress or elate us too greatly."

But Nan was flying about too busily to have these remarks sink in very deeply, it is to be feared. Celia's dignity could not resist the temptation of the spring morning. If Mrs. Barrett could go to the Zoo, she certainly could. And she should enjoy the drive, and especially seeing Baby's surprise and pleasure in this her first visit to the resort so full of wonders and delights for little eyes.

A merry carriage-load of young folks was soon trotting briskly out of the city, and up the long hill to Mt. Auburn. Every one courted the favor of Baby Brown as if she had been a queen, and vied with each other for the high privilege of holding her majesty. Happy little Baby Brown, all smiles and glee, to whose new eyes the world was all so fresh and wonderful!

The Zoölogical Garden lies on high ground, giving glimpses from its breezy heights of far-away blue hills. Its summits, crowned with grand old beeches, slope away into grassy valleys or woody ravines, where rustic bridges span little brooks. The wild animals have here such ample space and favorable surroundings, that one sees them as if in their native haunts. This morning, all living creatures felt the influence of the spring-time, and were at their brightest and best.

"Let's go first to the sea-lions," said Rose. "I want to see them fed."

They found the large sea-lion raging up and down the pond, lashing it into big waves, snorting and standing almost erect, every few moments peering with his dim-looking eyes for the man with his expected dinner. But a placard on the fence announced that it was yet half an hour to his dinner-time; so our friends went into the house near by where the elephant and giraffe were still in winter quarters.

Baby Brown was pleased with the giraffes, and said that their eyes looked like Stanford's,—a compliment duly forwarded to Stanford in the next letter. But the elephant, swaying and treading incessantly, stretching out his uncanny-looking trunk for an expected apple, filled her with terror; and she could not be induced to stop long enough even to admire the kangaroo, although he stood drooping his paws affably, evidently expecting a cracker.

Then they ran down the hill to the bear-pit. The enormous polar bears walked slowly round and round, winking greedily up at them with their hungry eyes.

"That big bear looks at Baby as if he thought she would be a delicious morsel," said Nan.

"Oh, I don't suppose they would touch us if we fell in," said Rose, at the same moment stepping up on the iron fence and leaning over for a better view. In an instant the she-bear leaped up on top of the rocks that formed the bears' cave, stood on her hind legs, and thrust her paw altogether too near Rose's foot to be pleasant.

"Rose!" screamed her mother, while Rose, pale and feeling suddenly weak, darted away from the fence.

"Never do that again," said her mother. "It is dangerous. I always thought these railings were too low. I only wonder that some child has not tumbled in before this. Come, we will go back to the sea-lions."

"Oh, mother, let us just peep at the baby grizzly! I won't get up on the railing again."

Baby Grizzly was asleep, curled up in a little brown bundle, while his huge mother lay close beside him, rolling her eyes watchfully about, but with an unmistakable look of mother-love and pride softening her grim face.

"Who would have thought," said Celia, "that a grizzly bear could look loving? But she actually does."

The girls would have liked to stop and watch the antics of the brown bears, one of whom had climbed upon the platform that crowned his pole, and lay spread out on his back sunning himself, in a grotesque attitude of bearish ease; while another, hanging to the pole below, devoted himself to tickling his comrade's feet, and otherwise teasing him.

"They act just like two boys," said Nan.

But Mrs. Barrett, who no longer enjoyed the bears, now insisted on a return to the sea-lion. They found him surrounded by a crowd of lookers-on. A man with a basket of fish ascended a ladder to a bridge, leading over the pond to the rocky island in its centre. He threw the fish far and near over the pond, but rarely did one touch the water. The sea-lion darted from side to side with lightning-like rapidity, caught a fish, swallowed it whole, and was ready for another before the man could put his hand into the basket again.

" He could take his meals at a railroad restaurant," said Celia.

"Oh, he 'd never need even the usual twenty minutes for refreshments," said Mrs. Barrett.

After swallowing eight or ten fish, and ploughing the water up and down in a vain search for more, he stretched himself lazily out on the rocks for a siesta.

Mrs. Barrett discovered, a little to her dismay at first, that the children from one of the public schools — a round thousand of them in all — were picnicking at the Zoo. There was ample room for every one, luckily ; only it was better to avoid the main points of interest. The feeding of the sea-lions being over, the crowd raced away to the bear-pits, the carnivora-house, — above all to the pony track and the monkey-house.

Nan and Rose had set their hearts on a pony-ride.

" I fear you will have to be disappointed to-day, girls," said Mrs. Barrett. "Of course I could not think of letting you ride in such a crowd."

They stood watching the crowd of children at the pony track. Every pony was in use, and was doing his best — by unexpected stops when at full gallop, kicking up, and other devices well known to ponies — to even matters with the tormenting school-boys; while the unfortunate donkey who drew the little dog-cart, goaded to desperation, wore an air of preferring death to life. But now two boys came down from the carnivora-house on a run, shouting, "Hi, boys, come on! They 're just going to feed the lions and tigers, and they're roaring like fun, and jumping all over their cages! Hurry up, or you 'll lose the fun!"

There was a general rush for the carnivora-house, and the pony track was deserted.

"Now is your time, girls," said Mrs. Barrett.

The happy Nan and Rose were mounted on two rough-coated ponies, who, pulled along by the pony-master, started on a reluctant trot, relapsing into a slow walk when safely beyond his whip. In vain did the girls urge them on. The ponies understood the situation perfectly, and persisted in calmly walking around the whole quarter of a mile at their own pace.

"I don't care," said Rose, whose happy nature always "made the best" of everything; "it only makes the ride last longer."

On a miniature pony named Topsy, in the

tiniest of side-saddles, Baby Brown was mounted; and, led by the pony-master's boy, rode proudly off, the happiest little creature the sun shone on that spring morning.

As the crowd now began to return, Mrs. Barrett and her company left, and visited the lions and tigers, the parrots, parroquets, and other birds. The accomplishments of one parrot filled them with awe. Addressed as "Polly," he answered "What?" Nan whistled to him.

"What 's the matter with you?" said Polly.

There seemed something unnatural, uncanny, in his intelligence, as he twisted his head and eyed them wisely, evidently prepared to "talk back" as long as they wished to continue the conversation.

"*Don't* go into that horrible monkey-house," exclaimed Celia, as they neared that place.

"The idea!" exclaimed Nan and Rose, in a breath.

"You would n't have Baby miss seeing the monkeys, Celia!" exclaimed Nan.

"I suppose, Celia," said Mrs. Barrett, "we must go in a little while. The children would be so disappointed!"

So in they went, and even Celia could not help being amused by the antics of two tiny baby monkeys. Some school-boys were amusing themselves by watching one of their number, who was insulting the dignity of a peculiarly solemn-looking monkey with side whiskers (whom the boys called "the minister"), by snapping his handkerchief at him. Suddenly the monkey seized the handkerchief, and leaped to the top of his cage with it. Here he sat gravely inspecting it all over, then bit out the centre and ate it with apparent relish, then rolled it carefully into a small ball, and carried it in his mouth as he retreated to a still safer corner of the cage, where his treasure would be more secure from the raids of his envious fellows. Every one was greatly entertained watching him, except the owner of the handkerchief, who slipped out hastily, feeling that the monkey had the best of that joke.

"Come, girls, you must tear yourselves away," said Mrs. Barrett, "if you want to see the buffalo calf, the prairie dogs, and the rest. It is nearly time for us to go home."

So only hasty visits were made to the numerous other animals. One visit hardly suffices to exhaust the resources of the Zoo, as Cincinnati children well know.

"We will come again sometime," said Mrs. Barrett, to console Nan and Rose. "But, Celia, don't miss that hint for Kensington work." They were passing a cage where thirteen solemn owls sat wisely blinking in a row on one perch. Every one laughed at the funny sight; but the owls preserved their reputation for wisdom, like some people, by looking wise and saying nothing.

For weeks after this delightful day, Baby Brown did little but "play Zoo," leaping like the kangaroos, growling like the tigers, climbing like the monkeys, or grovelling on the floor, a make-believe sea-lion catching fish. The horizon of her world had been wonderfully extended.

CHAPTER XII.

THE GRANDIN ROAD.

DON and Karl took the Eden Park road to Walnut Hills, because on this route at the foot of the steep eastern hills, the street-car is driven upon a large platform-car; and horses, street-car, and all mount in state together up a steep inclined plane, almost perpendicular. The horses wear a peculiarly serene air of content as the car ascends without effort on their part; while the passengers, as they rise above the roofs, enjoy an ever-expanding view of the city below, the great river with its steam-boats and bridges, and the fair Kentucky hills beyond. The ascent only lasts a moment. One instant you are down in the city streets, the next finds you on the open, breezy hill-top, and away the horses trot with you, winding along the heights of Eden Park, with charming river and park vistas on one hand, and on the other, glimpses of the smoky city far below.

Arrived at the end of the street-car route, the boys struck out on foot, keeping along the Madison Pike until they reached the Grandin Road. The change from narrow, smoky city streets to the wide expanse and boundless freedom of green fields and blue sky — the air blowing about them sweet with all country odors — exhilarated the boys, and made them ready for any exploit.

"Where shall we go first, Karl?" asked Don.

"Right to the woods. Then I think we'd best eat our lunches the first thing we do. I'm awfully hungry; aren't you, Don?"

"Yes, indeed, hungry as forty bears already!"

The Hollenbeck Woods were part of the large Hollenbeck estate, and crowned noble heights looking down on the Ohio. They were old woods, probably part of the primeval forest in which Indians and wild beasts roved, not so long ago; mostly grand old beeches, although variety was lent by scattered oaks and walnuts, thorn-trees with their long spikes, or red-bud trees, at this season illuminating the whole woods with their profuse pink bloom. As usual in Ohio woods, there was no undergrowth; and a soft, green turf, diversified with great patches of luxuriant wild flowers, spread everywhere under the drooping boughs, making a carpet on which fairies might dance, — on which you almost believe they do dance, when once the spell of these lovely woods is upon you.

Don and Karl found a convenient seat on the mossy trunk of a giant beech, prostrated in some bygone cyclone, tearing up roots, earth, and all in its downfall; and began at once the attack on their lunch baskets.

"How good everything always tastes outdoors!" said Don, leaning luxuriously back against a tree-trunk.

"I know it," said Karl. "When we lived out here on the Grandin Road, mother always had the supper-table set on the porch in summer time. It's a German fashion to eat outdoors, you know. There we used to sit under the vines, looking off up the river, watching the steam-boats go and come. It was awfully pleasant. I miss it since we moved into the city. Have a pretzel, Don?"

Don accepted with eagerness this delight of Cincinnati young people.

"Hullo! there's a steam-boat now coming around the turn."

Framed in by drooping beech boughs, the boys had a view far up the Ohio, to where it made a great bend between its hills. Around this bend swept a large steam-boat, a majestic sight, — its shrill whistle dying far away among the hills with a wild, reverberating echo that gave the boys somehow an agreeable feeling of adventure.

"It's the 'Bostona.' Does n't she look grand, ploughing and splashing along? I wish I were on her. Did you ever take a trip on the river, Karl?"

"Only to the picnic of Tom Winkler's Sunday School last summer. They went on a steam-boat to Parlor Grove. Father won't let me; thinks I'll get drowned."

"That's just the way with my father," said Don. "I wonder what's the reason fathers always seem to expect boys want to drown themselves!"

So large were the patches of wild flowers that overran the grassy knolls and hollows, so thick the blossoms, that their baskets were soon filled; and they were obliged to put branches of the red-bud tree in their hat-bands, for want of room to carry them otherwise.

"Now let's go up to Frank Hollenbeck's," proposed Karl, who had been a neighbor and intimate friend of the Hollenbeck boys when he lived in the country. "If Earl is at home, he'll take our pictures. He has a new photographic apparatus of his own, and he's wild about picture-taking."

The Hollenbeck mansion is one of the many stately houses that adorn the heights of Cincinnati's lovely suburbs, reminding one, in their seclusion and extent and beauty of surrounding, of English manor houses. At the roadside, often only an entrance-gate hints that a house is near. The perfect drive, winding along under noble trees, across ravines, and through woods, terminates at the house, which, rich inside with rare works of art, commands from every window lovelier pictures than earthly artist ever painted.

All boys are natural democrats. They care little who people are, only what they are. So

Karl and Don felt not the slightest diffidence at invading the grandeurs of the Hollenbeck premises in the patched and faded glories of their Saturday pantaloons. Frank Hollenbeck was "a good fellow," and his home a capital place for "a good time;" and that was all they thought or cared about it.

They took a cross-cut through the woods well known to Karl, then through the orchard and up a gently-sloping hill, where they came out on the edge of the lawn.

All was life about the place this morning. The coachman, under Nora's direction, was putting up a gayly-striped tent near the tennis court. Around him jumped and capered a group of little children, — they thought for joy over the new tent, but really because it was spring-time, because they were children and could not help it. It "jumped itself."

Mrs. Hollenbeck, with a broad shade-hat on and a trowel in hand, was directing the gardener about laying out some new flower-beds. She knew Don and Karl, in spite of appearances, to be eminently respectable, and good boys, as boys' goodness goes. She greeted them with a pleasant smile, saying, "Good morning, boys. So you are improving this pleasant day by getting out into the country! Frank and Earl are down somewhere about the stable, are n't they, Patrick?"

"Yes, 'm," said the gardener. "They 've been tazin' Mike's life out o' him the whole mornin' with their nonsense."

At the stable, the boys were joyfully welcomed by Frank. Earl had his camera down there, and had been trying to photograph Frank on the pony; but as neither pony nor Frank would keep still, his patience was nearly exhausted. He hailed new subjects with delight.

"Now, boys, just lie down on that cellar-door and I 'll put Ajax behind you and make a group of you."

"Oh, bother, Earl! the boys don't want to be sitting for your stupid pictures. Come on, boys, and let 's have some fun with the pony!" said Frank, to whom posing for Earl had long since ceased to be a pleasurable novelty.

The boys however liked the proposal, it all being new to them. They posed as requested on the cellar-door, naturally if not gracefully, and soon Earl produced from his dark closet in the stable a faithful tintype of the group, — baskets, patched pantaloons, flower-trimmed hats, and all. A critical person might have noticed that their boots — being nearest the camera as they lay on the door — were much enlarged, and figured quite too conspicuously in the pictures; but the boys were delighted, and sat several times for Earl, in various striking positions.

Then they played circus with the pony, performing a variety of feats on the back of that much-enduring animal. When the lunch-bell rang, Frank urged them to go in to lunch. The boys were hungry, but shyness kept them from accepting Frank's invitation; so they said, "We 've had our lunch already."

"Well, don't go away," said Frank. "Stay until I come back. I won't be gone long."

The boys in Frank's absence amused themselves with his big Newfoundland dog Ajax, — a creature so knowing, so full of dog-sense, entering so heartily into the boys' fun as if one of themselves, that when Don, tired of romping with him, threw himself on the ground beside

Karl, he said, "Ajax knows more than half the folks, don't you, old fellow?"

Ajax, who sat with his tongue out, regarding them with an affable smile, beat his tail upon the ground in vigorous assent.

Frank now came running down from the house with large pieces of cake which his mother had sent out to the boys.

"Let's go down to the river," he proposed, "and cross the ferry and go up on the Kentucky hills. I often go there wild-flowering. Mother says I may go this afternoon, if we'll be careful not to get drowned, and all that, you know."

Of course the boys were delighted with this proposal. Ajax, who seemed to realize that some expedition was on foot, accompanied them, testifying his joy by bounding ahead, jumping on them, giving loud barks of rapture, chasing a harmless kitten up a tree, and otherwise forgetting his usual dignity and behaving like any common small dog.

The ferry-boat was a broad, flat, slow-going, eminently safe craft, with ample room on it for any number of boys, one would have supposed. But three boys and a dog require a large space.

Our boys were all over the boat at once, from bow to stern, trying so many experiments and making themselves so numerous that they had the effect of a crowd.

The much-bothered captain, as he sat down a moment to wipe his forehead and take breath, said to a market-man who was crossing on his wagon, "I declare, boys do beat all. If I get these boys across without half on 'em getting drownded I shall be glad. There, what 's that? One on 'em overboard, I 'll bet!"

There was a loud splash, followed by cries of alarm. Frank, while daring the other boys to imitate him and stand on the edge of the boat, had lost his balance, fallen into the river, and disappeared under the swift yellow current. He would have drowned before the old captain and slow-witted market-man could have thought how to rescue him, had there not been a friend on board, as quick and brave as he was loving. Old Ajax was overboard in an instant.

"Ha, there he comes up! That 's his head! The dog sees him. No, he does n't. Yes, he does! He 's got his grip on him now! Here he comes, tugging him along. Hurrah! Well done, old fellow!" shouted the excited men, as brave old Ajax swam slowly but strongly up to the ferry-boat, bringing the unconscious Frank.

When after considerable effort Frank was revived, he looked about bewildered. It had all been so sudden, and taken so little time, that he hardly knew what had happened.

"What 's the matter?" he asked, faintly.

"Matter!" cried the captain. "The matter is, you 'd have been a dead boy before this if it had n't been for that dog of yours. I 've seen you aboard the boat before. You 're Hollenbeck's boy, ain't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"I thought so. Well, you jest stay on board this boat, and come right back with me. And then you put straight for home, and get something hot down, and go to bed. These other boys must go back, too. Don't know what folks is thinking of, I 'm sure, to let a parcel of harum-scarum boys like these run around loose."

"Boys have to do something," said the market-man, who had been a boy once himself, — not so long ago that he had as yet forgotten all about it. "And city boys don't have much chance to let off steam about home, you know."

"Well, they need n't come around getting drownded on my boat, if they have n't," said the captain, who, now that Frank was safe, felt annoyed at the unusual and unnecessary strain on his feelings.

The thoroughly sobered boys made no objections to coming back on the return trip. They sat still, saying nothing. Death always seems to young people such a far-away thing, — an accident, to which only very old or sickly folk are liable. To see Frank, one moment laughing, full of life, the next in the jaws of death; to see him lie there unconscious, looking so deathlike, — had been a great shock to them, and left an impression that would be long-enduring.

Old Ajax shook his dripping coat, and sat close by his master, watching him vigilantly, starting at his every motion, evidently expecting he might take a fancy any moment to go overboard again.

When landed on the Ohio shore, the boys helped Frank up the hill nearly to the house, and then left, feeling that this was hardly a favorable time to continue their visit.

They struck down into Fulton, proposing to take the Pendleton Street cars home. Passing a baker's shop, some fascinating pies in the window struck Don's eye.

"How lucky!" he exclaimed. "I 've fifteen cents, and that 'll just buy us a pie apiece. I 'm nearly famished; are n't you, Karl?"

"Never was hungrier in my life."

The boys were soon walking along, happy in the possession of two pies the size of their hat-crowns, and quite as juiceless. But, for some reason incomprehensible to older persons, boys like bakers' pies; and the only fault Don and Karl found with these was that they were too small.

It was six o'clock when they reached Fountain Square; and they were about saying good-by to each other and starting for their homes and dinners, when they heard the fire-bells ringing.

The boys pricked up their ears like the war-horse who smells the battle from afar.

"Hark, Karl! One, two, three, four, five, six, seven! One, two! Seventy-two!"

And Don pulled out a much-worn card and consulted it.

"Twelfth and Race! Bet you it's Music Hall! Come on, Karl!" and away they sped, at their best gait. What boy ever knew that he was tired, or that it was dinner-time, or anything else, when the fire-bells rang?

Up Race Street flew the panting boys, feeling certain that the fun would all be over before their arrival, as first the chief engineer dashed by them, his light buggy hardly touching the stones, then his assistant, then a hose-cart, then (most exciting of all) a steam fire-engine, — sparks flying, coals dropping, bell clanging, as its four magnificent great horses swayed up the street on a gallop, everything giving way before the fury of their on-coming. Click, click, went their feet on the stones, as they dashed by. It must indeed be a cold-blooded person who is not stirred by the spectacle of a steam fire-engine under full headway. No wonder the excited boys felt that their tired legs could not half keep pace with their frantic desire to get on.

It was not Music Hall, but proved to be quite a good fire, nevertheless, — a large factory. Don and Karl hung about, and even had the privilege of helping the book-keeper carry some of the books to a place of safety.

By the time the fire was nearly quelled and had ceased to be interesting, it was late and dark. As Don neared home, he rather hoped his father would not be in. But he was, and opened the door himself for Don, with a stern look of displeasure on his face. "What 's the meaning of this, sir? Your mother 's been worried to death about you, and I was just starting out to look you up."

Don told his story, trying to set it forth in the most favorable light possible. But it was difficult to make father see the necessity of his going to the fire, or appreciate his valuable services to the book-keeper. Moreover, the Hollenbecks being Dr. Brown's patients, his father was doubly annoyed that Don should have, as he chose to consider, led Frank into trouble.

"Go to bed at once, sir, without your dinner," he said. "You deserve no dinner."

But on mother's interceding for him, he was finally allowed some bread and butter before retiring.

"Did you use that money, Don?" asked his mother, as he was about going upstairs.

"Yes, 'm, I bought some pies with it. We were almost starved, — that lunch was n't anything, — and you know you said I was to use it in an emergency."

When Mrs. Brown returned to the sitting-room, she brought the tintype, and handed it to her husband. The Doctor's face involuntarily softened, as with an amused smile he gazed on the boyish, thoughtless faces under the flower-trimmed hats, as happy and free from care as that of the good-natured countenance of Ajax behind them.

"Boys will be boys, I suppose, as long as the world turns around," he said. "But it does seem as if Don were old enough to begin to think a little."

"Old heads don't grow on young shoulders," said the mother. "Time and trouble will teach him. He will do thinking enough before he is done with life."

Her husband's words had reminded her of an anonymous poem cherished in her scrap-book, which often helped her to be patient with Don.

"'Boys will be boys,'—but not for long.
Ah! could we bear about us
This thought,—how very soon our boys
Will learn to do without us;

"How soon the tall and deep-voiced men
Will gravely call us 'Mother,'
Or we be stretching empty hands
From this world to the other,—

"More gently we should chide the noise,
And when night quells the racket,
Stitch in but loving thoughts and prayers
While mending pants and jacket!"

CHAPTER XIII.

A DARK SHADOW.

THE excursion to the Zoo, like many other things that seem harmless at the time, brought after it a train of unforeseen consequences. One afternoon when Nan came home from school, she found her mother sitting before the fire with Baby in her arms, looking very anxious.

"What is the matter, mother?" asked Nan. "Baby is n't sick, is she?"

"I am afraid she is. I wish your father would come home. She has seemed to have a little cold for a day or two. But this afternoon she has grown worse very fast, and now seems really sick. I should think she had the measles if she could possibly have been exposed to them. But there are no cases anywhere around us."

Dr. Brown, however, pronounced it unmistakably the measles. Then every one remembered that it was just two weeks since the trip to the Zoo.

"Don't you remember, Nan," said Celia, "when we were in that crowd of school-children around the sea-lion, we noticed that little thing in charge of an older sister, who cried and coughed so much, and seemed so cross? We said then that she seemed sick, and not fit to be there."

"No doubt she had the measles," said Dr. Brown. "It is exactly like the criminal carelessness of some people to send a sick child among a crowd of children, and expose the whole of them. But Baby must have the measles sometime, and this is a favorable season. It will be a good thing to have over."

Baby Brown was a delicate little flower, who had never seemed to take very firm root in this rough world. All sickness went hard with her; and once or twice already she had nearly slipped away from the loving hands that clung to her into that other world of angels in which she believed so confidently. Although the weather was warm, and every care was taken of her, in some unknown way she took cold, and grew dangerously sick.

What a cloud rested on the household now! Mother was confined closely in Baby's room, seldom coming down, even for meals. Celia tried her best to fill mother's place, and relieve her from all care outside the sick-room. It was easy now for her to be patient with Nan and Don, — all the more that they too were trying to help in the only way possible to them, by being good and making no trouble.

Nan tried to pick up and put away her own things, and shut doors and drawers, and change her collars and cuffs without being told; and even thoughtless Don remembered not to bang the doors, but came and went so softly that no one heard him, studying his lessons without being told, and keeping about the house, ready to go on any needed errand.

One night, as Don was about going to bed, he stopped at the sitting-room door as if he wanted to say something, then started on again, sighing impatiently, "Oh, dear!"

"What is it, Don?" asked Celia.

"I do wish Baby would get well, so we could have mother around again. I 've but one button left on one shoe, and two hanging to the other, and both my suspender buttons are gone, behind, and I don't see what I'm going to do."

If there was anything the fastidious Celia particularly detested, it was sewing on a boy's shoe-buttons, and Don knew it. However, mother generally did all the disagreeable things that no one else liked to do. But to-night Celia said, "Why, I'll mend them for you of course. Just drop them over the banisters, and I'll leave them at your door when done."

"That's first-rate in you, Celia. I did n't suppose you'd be hired to do it. Nan tried, but she could n't make it work."

Celia felt ashamed of the picture thus unconsciously presented by Don, of her habitual selfishness. To think that Don had really hesitated to ask of her a necessary service!

Generally, she shuddered at the mere idea of taking Don's great dirty shoes in her lap, and poking the needle by main force through the thick, unsavory leather. But to-night, doing it voluntarily, it was not so dreadful after all; distasteful, but endurable, since it was a duty.

"There, that's done," said she to herself, "and

I'm not killed either. I don't suppose mother really likes to do it."

So Celia began to see dimly that love makes all things possible, if not easy.

The house seemed so unnatural these days, so still, empty, forlorn! People say sometimes of a death, "It was only a baby." Only! The Browns realized now that cunning, restless, merry Baby was at least half the family; and if her little life must go out, with it would depart much of the joy and brightness of the home.

Every nook and corner had something to remind them of Baby, — the cunning cloak and hood that looked just like her, hanging idle on the hat-rack; the high-chair set back against the dining-room wall; the unnatural order of the sitting-room; the empty basket rocking-chair; the comical row of dolls and animals sitting solemnly upright on the closet shelf, in a most unnatural state of order. Still, young minds are naturally hopeful; and although the children knew that Baby was very sick, the possibility of her actually dying had not occurred to them until there came a day when their father asked his friend Dr. Parsons to come and see her.

Don came home from school that night the back way, and through the kitchen.

"Is Baby worse?" he asked the first thing, for Bridget's eyes were red, as if she had been crying.

"Oh, yes, the dear little creature! Your father's had Dr. Parsons down here, and he thinks she can't get well."

Don's heart sank within him.

"Your mother's in the dining-room. Your father said she must come down and try to eat something, for she will be up all night."

Don had not seen his mother for two days. He went into the dining-room.

"My dear boy!" said his mother, drawing him to her, and kissing him. Each child was doubly precious to her, now that death hovered over the house, threatening to make the first break in the little band.

Mother looked so sad and worn.

"Must Baby — do you think, mother, she will —" Don could not bring himself to say that dreadful word "die."

"She is very, very sick, Don; but you know while there is life there is hope. We must do all we can for her, and hope to the last. Dr. Parsons' opinion was very discouraging; but your father says that Dr. Parsons does not know the 'hold on' quality of the Brown constitution, and that she would have died long before this if she had not been a Brown. He hopes her constitution will pull her through, yet. But to-night will be a critical time for her."

Celia, while her mother was downstairs, sat in the sick-room, beside the unconscious little sufferer. An awful silence filled the room, broken only by Baby's quick, fluttering breath, so light and irregular that again and again Celia fancied it had wholly ceased. Celia remembered now, with a pang that hurt like a physical pain, so acute was it, how often she had been cross, — cross to mother, cross to Baby herself, because obliged to take care of her when she wanted to do something else. Oh, if she might only have her back again! If Baby died, she must bear, her life long, this pain of unavailing regret.

Don found Nan in the sitting-room, crying as if her heart would break, holding in her lap a canton-flannel cat with protruding shoe-button eyes, whose ugliness had made it a standing joke in the family, but which had been very precious to Baby.

"Oh, Don," she said, "I just came across this cat. Don't you remember, Don, how Baby was afraid of it at first, and screamed when you poked it at her and mewed? But afterwards she loved it so! I found it carefully put to bed in my work-basket. One day, Don, don't you remember, I felt cross because mother made me practise an extra half hour for dawdling; and when I stumbled over this cat on the floor I threw it clear across the room as hard as I could. And Baby cried so, and said, 'Bad Nan, to hurt pretty puss-cat.' And I snapped out, 'I don't care. Keep your ugly old thing out of the way then!' I can think of such lots of things I wish I had n't said and done. Oh, if Baby will only get well, I'll be so good to her, always!"

Sad, sad words are they, the "don't you remembers," when by their aid we seek in vain to recall for a moment a dear, forever-vanished one!

Dinner was carried off the table almost untouched; and then the children sat around the sitting-room fire, waiting. It was impossible to read, or study, or do anything but wait. It seemed so strange to hear people's voices on the street saying, with cheerful carelessness, "Good evening. Pleasant, to-night!"

Children ran, shouting and laughing, up and down the street, and the girl across the way was playing waltzes as usual. And, upstairs, Baby lay dying!

By and by their father came down from the sick-room. "Go to bed now, children. We must try and keep the rest of you well. Baby remains just the same. The fact that she grows no worse is, of itself, encouraging. Try to go to sleep."

Father's voice and manner were unwontedly gentle, and he kissed them all. They crept softly up to bed.

Don had begun to think that he was too big to say his prayers,—that praying was something only suited to quite little boys and girls. But he was to learn, as has many an older person, that we cannot get along very well in this world without God. Straits come in every life when only God can help.

Don said his prayers to-night; no, he prayed, — a quite different thing. For the first time in his life, perhaps, his thoughts rose, full of awe, to God, as he asked Him, putting the force of his whole soul into it, to "please make Baby well."

Don woke very early the next morning. The house, to his anxious fancy, seemed unnaturally still. Had death come in the night? Was a little — oh, so little! — coffin to stand in their parlor; and then would a slow, sorrowful procession be winding out towards Spring Grove to a short grave, that would take such a little space on the big world's surface, but mean so much to them?

These sad imaginings were interrupted by a tap on the door, and Nan's uncombed head was thrust into the room.

"Oh, Don," she said, fairly crying for joy and relief, "mother's just been up to tell us that papa says Baby is really better this morning. The fever has left her, and her breathing is even and regular, and she is sleeping naturally. Papa says he thinks with great care she will get well now. Oh, I never was so happy in my life!

Mamma is going to lie down now for an hour or two, and try to get a nap, so we must all be as still as mice."

Don felt as if a heavy stone were lifted from his heart. It seemed too good to be true, at first, that the dark shadow had really gone from their home. Death had looked in at the window, but not entered the door. Perhaps God had some work in the world that only tiny Baby Brown could do, and so had sent back the tender little soul into life again, to do its part, and bear its share of the burden and the joy of living.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE REACTION.

LITTLE people always surprise every one by the rapidity with which they come up from a severe sickness. They come up as quickly as they go down. But a few days after Baby Brown had turned back from death's door to life again, she manifested a desire to play. The first time that Don and Nan were admitted to see her, she looked up at them, saying in a feeble little voice they could hardly hear, "Don build block-houses for Baby."

The children were delighted. Nan brought the blocks and wooden animals. Baby, wrapped in shawls and propped with pillows, looking so pale and weak and thin, regarded gravely but with evident interest the wonderful structures erected on the bed before her by Don and Nan. Next they made a Zoo for the animals. Then the happy thought struck Don of making a church.

All the animals went in state, wearing Baby's tin teacups for hats; the monkey played the organ, and the elephant, as the minister, sat on his hind legs with the tin milk-pitcher on his head, and with much dignity preached this sound, if somewhat trite, discourse: "My dear young friends, — be good and you 'll be happy. If you 're not good, you won't be happy, and don't you forget it. The congregation will join with the choir in singing 'The Sweet By and By,' " — which they did, with fervor.

Baby was so pleased with this new game, that "church" was repeated until she absolutely could not sit up another moment. In another day or two she was able to sit up in the sea-chair, and have her playthings on the lap-board before her. Finally there came a time when she was dressed again. Papa brought her downstairs in his strong arms, and, after many days, the Browns were all together again around the dinner-table, — not a chair vacant. It was a genuine Thanksgiving-dinner to them, if it did come in summer.

But, having progressed thus far, Baby came to a standstill. She was wee, white, wan; had little appetite or strength, and was hard to amuse. It was now late in May; and May in Cincinnati is a summer month. This year the hot weather came on suddenly, and people felt it more severely than later, in July and August.

Human nature, especially young human nature, is too much like a pendulum. If it has swung to an extreme of goodness, it too often, on the return, touches the other extreme of badness. The Browns had been preternaturally kind, helpful, and considerate for so long, that perhaps it was hardly strange that a reaction should set in with the first hot wave.

Nan came home one night, red-faced and perspiring, threw her books at a chair, whence they tumbled, crash, on the floor, while she herself fell into another chair with a force that threatened to crush it.

"For pity's sake, don't make such an outrageous noise, Nan," snapped Celia, savagely. "Pick up your books, can't you?"

"When I get ready, I will," retorted Nan, ready for battle as soon as Celia waved the red flag at her, — glad to fight some one, indeed, she felt so cross. "I don't have to mind you, I guess. Oh dear, I'm nearly melted! Of course there never is a fan anywhere about this house. Get me a fan, won't you, Celia?"

"The idea of expecting me to wait on you, Nan Brown!"

"Well, I don't care, I think you might. I've had this hot walk all the way from school, in the broiling sun. There isn't a single shady spot on Seventh Street in the afternoon. And here you've been sitting all the day long, cool and comfortable, in this shady sitting-room, with the breeze blowing through, in a cambric dress, doing nothing!"

"Doing nothing, indeed! As if I hadn't been holding that poor, hot, little baby in my lap, building houses and playing dolls, till I'm tired to death. My arms actually ache. She wouldn't amuse herself a minute, and mother was trying to sew some."

"I hope then she's fixing my thin dresses. I nearly roasted in this old cashmere thing to-day. Nearly every girl at school but me had on a wash-dress, and I think it's too bad!"

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Nan. You know very well that Baby's sickness put all mother's spring work back. You grow so, there's no keeping a dress in sight of you, anyway."

"I can't help growing, can I?"

But here Mrs. Brown came in, and the girls, at sight of her pale, tired face, had the grace to stop disputing.

"Need I practise to-day, mother?" asked Nan, in a tone of suffering.

"Why not?"

"It's so awfully hot!"

"Yes, certainly. We feel the heat much less to go right on about our usual duties than if we sit around, doing nothing, complaining and thinking how uncomfortable we are."

Nan said nothing, but banged out of the room; and the stormy music, a genuine tempest on the piano, which soon came up from the parlor below, indicated that she still possessed considerable vigor, in spite of her prostration.

Nan forgot that her mother — not strong at best, worn now by Baby's illness and full of many cares — probably suffered more from the heat than she did. Like many young people, she felt that she was the chief, if not the only, sufferer, and that the heat was an affliction sent especially to her.

Don came home late from school that night, looking cross, his worst self evidently uppermost.

"Has anything gone wrong, Don?" asked his mother, anxiously. She was always troubled at that look on Don's face.

"Miss Parsons kept me after school because I did n't know my grammar! A lot of stupid stuff about subjects and predicates, — no sense to it! I hate grammar, and it's too hot to study, anyway!"

"But, my dear, don't you suppose Miss Parsons feels the heat too? I've taught, myself, and I remember well how hard school used to go when the first warm weather came; I felt so miserably myself, and the scholars lost all interest, and were so idle and listless. I always pity school-teachers in warm weather."

It was a new idea to Don that teachers had feelings, and might perhaps suffer from the heat as much as their pupils. He was not disposed, however, to yield his point. Miss Parsons was an enemy, who had wronged him deeply, and he said, "Well, they might let up on us a little then, I think."

"Miss Parsons has no choice, Don. She is required to keep you up to the work of your grade. You would feel badly, yourself, if you should not pass for the Intermediate."

This was true, but Don did not like to admit it; so he only said, "I 'm going over to the drug-store for a glass of soda water," and vanished.

The next day was Saturday. At the breakfast table Mrs. Brown said, "Don, I want you and Nan to take Baby down to Lincoln Park this morning, for an hour or two, before the sun gets too hot. She is so miserable, poor little thing, that she needs all the fresh air she can get. And she always enjoys Lincoln Park so much."

Baby was at once all excitement. She began trying to cram a piece of bread into her little apron pocket, chattering, "Baby feed birdies. Baby see quacks. Ooo — Ooo —" a noise descriptive of the peacock's screech.

Nan looked doubtful at first. The girls at school might not think Lincoln Park a fashion-

Margaret Cummings

able resort. But, then, she need not tell them; and she did enjoy going there.

"Yes, I 'll go, mother," she said cheerfully. "Excuse me, please," and she was off to get herself and Baby ready.

Don, to his mother's surprise, declined going. She had proposed the plan partly on his account, because she dreaded a long, idle Saturday for him in his present mood.

"Why, I thought you always liked to go to Lincoln Park. You can row, you know. If you have one of the men go too, you may take Nan and the baby out."

"I don't want to go," said Don, evading his mother's eye. "It 's too hot to do anything."

"Then you may drive me on my round of visits this morning," said his father.

This was a frequent way of disposing of Don's holidays, which usually he enjoyed. To-day he looked sulky, as if he did not want to go, but dared not object.

The truth was, Don had resolved to do something wrong. He had an excellent conscience, but did not always obey it. Now this faithful conscience was making him uncomfortable within;

and because he felt uncomfortable and out of conceit with himself, he was cross. But all the same he was resolved on carrying out his plan.

"I don't see what I am to do," said his mother. "I can't let Nan and the baby go down there alone. And Baby will be so disappointed if the plan is given up now, after her heart is set on it."

Don weakened a little at this, and might perhaps have yielded; but Celia said, "I will go down with them, mother."

Celia, Nan, and the baby were soon off in the horse-cars for the Park. This little oasis of green looked so pleasant to them this morning, after the hot glare of the stony streets and brick houses, reflecting and doubling every particle of the sun's heat. The air was still fresh and cool in the park, and had a faint grassy odor, deliciously like the "real country," as Nan said.

They sat on one of the benches near the pond's edge, in the shade, and let Baby trot about, picking up gravel-stones. But soon the peacocks over on the island spied them, and came flying over, their long tails dipping in the water, landing at Baby's feet, evidently confident of bread crumbs. The geese and ducks too came waddling awkwardly up on land, until Baby was surrounded by quite a court of feathered creatures, each intent on gobbling down more than his share of bread crumbs. They were not afraid of Baby, nor she of them. She and they seemed to have a secret understanding, a comradeship.

Lucy Larcom's pretty poem might truthfully have been applied to Baby: —

"I feel at home with everything
That has its dwelling in the wood;
With flowers that laugh, and birds that sing, —
Companions beautiful and good.
Brothers and sisters everywhere,
And, over all, our Father's care."

Little children, in their love and trusting innocence, have a beautiful natural fearlessness, a kinship with all Nature, until grown people spoil it by teaching them to fear the thunderstorm, by crying, "Look out! that dog might bite you. Don't pat that horse, he will kick. Ugh, kill the ugly bug!" and so on.

Lincoln Park was all a-swarm with babies this morning, as usual, — a good many aristocratic babies, trundled along in state by nurses, but more babies from back alleys, lugged by puny sisters not much bigger than the babies themselves.

Who could begin to estimate the value of this little spot of green, with its flowers, fountain, birds, trees, and miniature sheet of water, to those children who at home lived crowded into one or two close, dark rooms, where God's pure air and sunlight never entered? It was all the country most of them knew; it was their sea-shore, their "going abroad,"—nay, more, it was life itself to many of them.

Nan, looking down the walk, suddenly exclaimed, "Oh, Celia, if there aren't Rose Barrett and her big brother and Nora Hollenbeck!"

Nan ran to meet her friends, and exclaimed, "Why, Rose, I did n't know that you ever came here!"

"Oh, yes, indeed, we often come. Ned likes to practise rowing, and father thinks this is such a safe place for him. It's so convenient, too. Nora is spending the day with me, and Ned brought us over for a row."

"Won't you all come out with us?" asked Ned. "Rose can tell you I am quite an oarsman, so you may feel perfectly safe."

"Indeed he is," said Rose. "He ought to be, if practice makes perfect. He goes to Harvard next year, and expects to be first stroke of the Harvard Crew, I suppose."

Ned did not see fit to notice this gentle, sisterly sarcasm, as they all went down the landing-steps, and embarked in a large row-boat, covered with a gayly striped awning.

They went around the pond again and again,—now under the trailing weeping-willow branches that touched the water, now into the fine spray of the fountain that wrinkled the pond with its tinkling downfall, or blew about in misty, fantastic shapes at the wind's will.

A pleasant breeze fluttered the awning's red-striped curtains. The bright, happy group of gayly dressed young folks under the awning made a pretty picture, as the boat glided in and out through shadow and sunlight, that gave pleasure to all the children on shore even, who watched the scene with as much delight as if it had been devised for their especial benefit.

"Do see Baby," said Nan. "I have n't seen her laugh so hard, or seem so much like herself, since she was sick."

Baby was throwing crumbs into the water; and the boat, to her great glee, was consequently closely followed in all its windings by a train of ducks and ducklings, —

> "Swimming double, swan and shadow,"

as Celia, fresh from Wordsworth in her English literature, poetically observed.

Ned gave Celia a rowing-lesson. Celia now and then "caught a crab," it is true; but on the whole reflected such credit on her teacher that Ned said, admiringly, "I never knew a young lady learn to row so easily. I tried to teach Rose, but she made no headway at all. You ought to keep it up. We will arrange some rowing-parties. Early morning is the best time. I come here sometimes at five o'clock."

"Five o'clock!" exclaimed Celia, in dismay.

"Yes, five o'clock. It is really lovely here then, cool and still, and there is seldom any one here but the attendants."

It had long been one of Celia's ambitions to learn to row.

"I will certainly try it, if I can get Don to escort me. He enjoys rowing so much, that I am sure he will consent even to rising at that unheard-of hour; though early rising is not, in general, one of his leading virtues."

Don might have been one of this merry party to-day. He liked to row, he liked to see Baby enjoy herself, he liked pretty girls such as Rose and Nora. Altogether, he would have acknowledged it a thoroughly "good time." But he had chosen a very different kind of pleasure, as the next chapter will show.

CHAPTER XV.

DON HAS HIS OWN WAY.

WHEN Don returned from driving his father, he ate his dinner hurriedly, ran upstairs a moment, then down and out the front door before his mother could catch him to ask where he was going. She even went to the gate. But Don had already vanished around the corner; and as has been said, when a city boy is once around the corner, he may be anywhere.

She came in, looking anxious. "Did Don tell you his plans for the afternoon?" she asked his father.

"No. He did n't talk much. In fact, I was so absorbed thinking over Mrs. Brewer's case, that I did not pay much attention to him. Her case is a strange one, — different, in some respects, from anything in my experience. I fully expected to find her better; but instead, her symptoms were in every way more unfavorable. I don't understand it. I must see what the books say about it."

And the Doctor disappeared in his office, too absorbed in professional cares, as was often the case, to think much about his family. His wife disliked to interrupt him, knowing that life or death might hang on these thoughts and studies.

She sewed with a heavy heart that afternoon, often stopping if she heard a boy's whistle, going to the window and looking up and down the street in the vain hope of seeing Don.

Around the corner waiting for Don, were Bill Schraider and two other large boys from Don's room at school, intimates of Bill.

"Here he comes at last," said Bill. "Began to think you 'd flunked. Got your money?"

"Yes," said Don.

"All right. Come along, then. We 've got to hurry, or we shall lose the train."

Perhaps few parents fully realize the strong influences exerted over their children by their school-associates. In the school-world they move in an atmosphere and act from a class of motives often differing widely from those pervading the home-world.

Don was impulsive, and easily influenced. At home, he might be able to perceive that Bill and his sort were not altogether admirable. But Bill was the big tyrant and bully of the school-yard. His brag and swagger imposed upon the boys, and made them believe he was almost as smart and knowing as he professed to be.

Don had felt flattered that Bill had lately seemed to seek his society, and confer on him the honor of belonging to his set. It made him feel manly, distinguished from the crowd of smaller boys over whom Bill domineered.

Friday afternoon, at recess, Bill had taken him confidentially aside, and said, "Mike and Jim and I are going out to the Base Ball Park to-morrow afternoon, to see the great match between the Cincinnatis and Louisvilles. It 's going to be the biggest thing of the season, — a regular drawn game. We want you to go along with us."

Don would not have been a human boy if he had not also been a base-ball enthusiast. He was always down early, the morning after a game, to look at the score before his father wanted the paper; and his spirits rose or fell with the Cincinnatis' triumphs or defeats, as if his own personal gain or loss were at stake.

His face lighted up now with eagerness. "Oh, I want to go just awfully, but I can't."

"What's the reason?"

"Reason enough. I have n't the money."

"Can't you get around the old man? Won't he shell out?"

Don did not wholly relish hearing his father called "the old man" by Bill, but said nothing, fearing that Bill would sneer at him, and call him a "milk-sop" or "baby," if he objected. Bill and his friends were devoted readers of "The Boys' and Girls' Weekly," "The Boys of New York," and kindred sheets, — part of whose wit consisted in always alluding to fathers as "the old man," "the guv'nor," "the boss."

The last time that Don went to the Base Ball Park, his father had said, "You may go to-day, Don, on condition that you don't ask me again this month. There must be some limit to the thing."

Although his father might have relented in view of the special interest of this game, and let him go as usual with Walter Holmes, it would be worse than useless to ask permission to go with Bill Schraider. But he did not choose to tell Bill all this. So he only said, "No, it 's no use asking him. I can't go."

"Why don't you take some of your own money, and go? You were bragging the other day that you had two dollars of your own laid up."

The boys had laughed at Don for never having seen a certain dark melodrama, whose blood-curdling show-bills — life-size in gaudy colors — of stabbings, shootings, etc., made hideous just then every fence and shed in Cincinnati.

"Don Brown can't go. His pappy won't let him."

"I can go if I 've a mind to, I guess. I've two dollars of my own," Don had angrily retorted.

The secret of Bill's recent friendship for Don was his desire to get hold of this money.

Mrs. Brown's birthday came in June; and the children had been saving their allowances for some time to surprise her with some unusually nice present. Only a day or two ago they had compared notes, and Celia had said, "How nice! We shall have enough to buy that lovely engraving of 'Saint Catherine borne to her rest by Angels,'

Alice

which she admires so much. Papa says he will pay for the frame. I know she would like that more than anything else we could think of."

There was to be a grand evening celebration of the occasion, with speeches, songs, etc., which should call out the full talent of the Brown family.

Don might well hesitate to take this money; but still more did he hesitate to tell Bill the purpose for which the money was pledged.

Don had an under-feeling he could not have defined, that home and mother were not the topics for Bill's coarse handling. If Don had thought a moment, even he might have realized that a boy to whom he was ashamed to allude to at home as a friend, and to whom he shrank from mentioning home friends and pleasures, was hardly a desirable companion.

But Don never stopped to think. That was always his trouble. He was too apt to drift where the moment's impulse took him. Just now, Bill's influence being present was the strongest.

Bill observed his hesitation. "You ain't afraid, are you, — afraid to spend your own money? I hope you ain't stingy. I hate mean folks," said he, with a grand air.

If the day had not been so warm, and if Don had not fallen into difficulty with Miss Parsons, perhaps he might yet have resisted. But after he had been kept in to study the detested grammar, when he came out, hot, cross, feeling injured and abused, ready to do something desperate, Bill was waiting for him in the school-yard; and Don easily yielded and promised to go.

He argued to himself, unconsciously repeating Bill's ideas, "It 's my own money, and I can do what I please with it. Father 's no business, anyway, to keep me down so strict, as if I were a little boy. I 'm big enough now to have my own way."

At times, the next day, he wavered and was half tempted to give up the project, especially when unwilling thoughts of mother's birthday forced themselves into his mind. But he had promised Bill, and dreaded to face that tyrant's wrath the next Monday morning, should he fail to keep his agreement. Don did not fear any boy of his own size. But Bill was the largest boy in the yard, and fond of telling where he would knock any boy to who should dare stand up against him.

"Where's your two dollars, Don?" asked Bill, as they entered the Park gate.

"I only brought one," said Don.

It was remarkable how much like a thief he had felt, slipping slyly upstairs and taking "his own money."

"Only one dollar! You little, mean —" But Bill checked himself. "Well, give me what 's left. You 'll treat, of course."

Don could not refuse, especially as Bill had paid his fare out; and Bill, with an air of owning the whole park, slapped the fifty cents down on the counter of a refreshment-stand near by, and called for cigarettes, coolly pocketing the change.

"Smoke?" said Bill, generously offering Don a cigarette purchased with his own money.

Don was put in a hard place. He had never smoked, and was ashamed to own this creditable fact; so he said nothing.

Jim laughed contemptuously, and said, "The baby don't know how."

"His mammy won't let him," said Mike.

"Shut up!" said Bill. "Of course he smokes. Here, Don."

Thus encouraged, Don took the cigarette; and the four boys, all smoking, sauntered on and found a good place to see the game.

It was a hot afternoon, and the sun poured down relentlessly on the Base Ball Park. Don swallowed some of the cigarette smoke, and began to grow sick. A glass of stale lemonade, made from lemons that had long outlived their usefulness, failed to relieve him. The boys noticed his pallor, and made fun of him, thinking it a good joke.

Never in his life had Don felt so uncomfortable and disgusted, in both mind and body. The game he had so much anticipated proved a failure, from his point of view. The Cincinnatis were badly beaten, scoring only one to the Louisvilles' seven. But chiefly was he disgusted with Bill and his friends. He wished he had never seen them. He loathed them, and their coarse, vile talk, and domineering, brutal ways.

Bill, now that Don's money was gone, regarded him as a "sucked orange," to be cast off. When it was time to go home, Bill counted the loose change left, and found that there was not enough to take them all back. Jim and Mike, however, produced a few pennies, which made enough to pay for three on the steam-cars.

"Got any horse-car tickets?" Bill asked Don.

Don hunted through his pockets, and found one car-ticket.

"That fixes us all right, then," said Bill. "That 'll take you part way in, and you can foot the rest of it. You 're young, you know."

"But I don't want to go in the street-cars. It 's my money," said Don, growing angry. "I'm going on the train myself. Give me that money."

"Oh, ho," laughed Bill, "just hear him! Smart Aleck! Let 's see you get it, you little, mean, stingy puppy, you."

But we will not record Bill's remarks in full. Don was helpless, and had to take the horse-cars, and walk the last mile in the heat and dust.

He reached home late, so dirty and miserable in appearance, that one would hardly have recognized him, at first glance. A little of the Bill Schraider look clung to him, — so surely do we take the tone of our associates.

Don loitered as he neared the house. He hardened himself.

"Very likely father will thrash me. Well, let him if he wants to. I don't care," and Don looked ugly and defiant.

In the dusk he could dimly see some one standing at the gate. It was his mother. Don shrank from meeting her. But she saw him, and ran out. "Oh, Don, I 'm so glad you 've come!" she said, and kissed him.

Don felt so dirty and degraded that he fancied it must soil mother to kiss him. But the kiss softened his heart a little, nevertheless.

"Your father wanted to see you in the office as soon as you came in. Be brave, Don, and tell the whole, whatever it is."

Mother's voice trembled. She had been crying.

Dr. Brown looked up from his books, as the office-door shut. There, in the gas-light, stood Don, dirty, disreputable, with a sulky, hang-dog look on the face generally so bright and jolly. A sickening odor of cigarettes diffused from his clothes through the office.

It was a critical moment for both father and son. Don's future hung largely on it. It might be true, as some people would say, that he "deserved a good thrashing." But harsh treatment in his present mood would certainly harden him, and leave a hurt never to be healed.

Handling young souls is delicate work, too delicate for the bungling hands into which it often falls. Celia came honestly enough by her fiery disposition, for Dr. Brown was a quick-tempered man. But to-night a burden lay heavy on his soul. He blamed himself for the absorption in his profession which had made him, he felt, culpably negligent of his children. He had taken it easy, turned over all responsibility to his wife, and left his boy to drift into the perils and temptations thick on every hand in a great city.

So said conscience. As he looked at Don, his heart yearned over him. A voice from heaven seemed to say to him, "This is the boy I have given you. See what you are making of him."

Not the sternness Don expected, but a great sadness was in his look and voice, as he said, "Come here, my boy."

His father's unwonted seriousness and tenderness went straight to Don's heart. That interview drew father and son together, in a closeness never known before. Don saw a side of his father's character hitherto unimagined. For the first time, he realized that his father was not an arbitrary monarch, who gave or forbade pleasures merely according to his own whims, but a friend, his best friend, who desired only his well-being.

Don told his father the whole pitiful story. His father made him see that the worst coward is he who does wrong because he is afraid,—afraid of being laughed at.

"It sometimes takes more courage, Don, to say that one little word, 'No,' than to face a battery," he said. "But you must learn to do it, or you will be a poor, contemptible moral coward all your life,—a tool of the Bill Schraiders of the world."

Don begged that his mother and sisters should not know about his having taken the money. "I will work some way, and earn it back, before the birthday," he said. "Please don't tell them, father."

His father promised, feeling the importance of preserving Don's self-respect by not degrading him in the eyes of the family.

Don wanted no dinner. He slipped up to bed, avoiding seeing any of the family. His last conscious feelings, as he fell into a sleep of utter exhaustion, were a warm glow in his heart towards his father, as he contrasted his friendship with Bill Schraider's.

CHAPTER XVI.

CELEBRATING A BIRTHDAY.

MRS. BROWN'S birthday was to be celebrated in a variety of ways. Don bent all his energies to devising some means of earning a dollar before that day came. He thought of rising early and selling newspapers on the street, like his friend Walter. Then it occurred to him, " No, that would be mean, — taking the bread out of poor boys' mouths, who need every cent they can earn. I must find something else."

One day, to his joy, his father said, " I have a job for you, Don. Our Association want notices distributed all over the city, of a lecture which comes off next week. They want the notices all out in two days. I said that I knew a boy who would be glad to take the West End. You will have to get two or three boys to help you. The work will easily be worth a dollar apiece."

Walter Holmes, Harry Eckert, and Jacob Bloch were without difficulty secured by Don as assistants. The boys were full of their plans, and it was not strange that their fine financial prospects leaked out at school, and that Don was soon overrun with offers of would-be partners.

Don had avoided Bill Schraider ever since the Base Ball excursion ; and Bill, having no special use for Don, had let him alone. But now he was determined to be admitted to a partnership in Don's undertaking, meaning at the same time to absorb the lion's share of the profits. He waited after school for Don, but Don slipped out another way, and was off before Bill could catch him.

The next day, however, as he was out distributing notices, Bill suddenly popped upon him from around a corner. He seized the bunch of circulars, and tried to wrench them from Don, who, however, hung manfully to them.

"Here," he said, "give me some of these. I 'm in for part of this job, and there 's no use o' your dodging. Hand over."

"I won't do it," said Don.

"You won't, hey ? I 'll see if you won't," said

Bill, giving Don a blow, intending to follow it up with more. But Walter Holmes, who had taken the opposite side of the street, saw Don's trouble, and ran to the rescue. On seeing Walter, — a boy of his own size, but of slighter build, — Bill beat a hasty retreat, calling back to Don, "I 'll pay you for this."

"Mean, sneaking coward!" said Walter. "I believe even you could whip him, Don, if you would only stand up to him."

"Do you really think so, Walter?" asked Don, his face lighting up with joy at this new idea.

"Yes, I do. A bully is always a sneak and a coward at bottom."

The next day was the birthday. Don went to school in the best of spirits. The dollar was earned and paid over to Celia, and the programme for the evening all arranged. Don thought Bill would probably be lying in wait for him, but had privately resolved to make one bold strike for freedom. He was not destined to disappointment. At recess, Bill and some of his set came over to the corner where Don with other boys was playing marbles.

"Now, young Smartey," said Bill, "you just hand over that money of yours, every cent of it. You 'll find you don't make much cheating me out of my share in that job. Hand over, and I 'll call it a square thing. If you don't, I 'll lick you so you can't see. Come, hurry up! Fork out!"

"I won't," said Don, a trifle pale, but standing erect, and looking Bill defiantly in the eye.

"I 'll hold him for you, Bill," said Jim Miller, seizing Don roughly. "Give it to him, Bill."

This was Bill's style of fighting. Two or three of his set were wont to fall upon a small boy and maltreat him at their pleasure.

"For shame! No! No!" called out the smaller boys who had gathered around.

"Shut up, or I 'll give you a dose when I get through with him," said Bill.

But here Pat Reilly, a big strong Irish boy, came up, laid hold of Jim, and twitched him over backwards on the ground.

"Fair play 's the game when I 'm around," said Pat. "Give the little un a chance. Sail into him, Donny, me boy. I belave you 'll bate him out of sight."

Don needed no urging. He was angry through and through, every inch of him. He flew at Bill, not very scientifically, perhaps, but in such dead earnest that his blows went home tellingly. Bill hit back; but, as has been said, a square fight was not in his line, and Don was holding his own wonderfully, to the admiration and delight of the surrounding crowd of boys, Bill's comrades excepted, when Joe Selden, on the outside of the crowd, suddenly cried, "Hi, boys, look out! Here comes Mr. Lathrup!"

There was a scattering at once, but not before Mr. Lathrup had arrived on the scene and captured the chief offenders. Fighting in the school-yard was strictly forbidden, and no offence was worse in Mr. Lathrup's eyes.

"Go up to my room, both of you," he said, sternly. "Donald Brown, I am surprised! I should not have expected this of you."

"You 're in for it now," whispered Joe Selden, consolingly, as Don passed him.

Something within told Don that he had not done wrong, although appearances were so much against him. A clear conscience is a wonderful support. So his joy at having successfully resisted his tyrant was hardly dampened as he sat at one side of Mr. Lathrup's room, watching the foe opposite wipe his bloody nose, already swelling rapidly from contact with Don's fists.

Mr. Lathrup examined each boy separately. He then took the testimony of the other boys present at the fight. Boys who from fear of Bill had not hitherto dared complain to the principal now gave instances of his habitual brutality and lowness, which, combined with Miss Parsons' report of him as a scholar, convinced Mr. Lathrup that forbearance had ceased to be a virtue, and that the time had come when the welfare of the school required that Bill should go. So Bill was expelled; and a solemn warning was given his friends, which effectually quelled them for the rest of the term.

To Don Mr. Lathrup said: "There are many extenuating circumstances in your case, Donald, and your usual good record must be taken into consideration. Still, you have flagrantly violated a known rule of the school, and I cannot let it go unnoticed. You must remain in during recess for a week."

Don was the most cheerful martyr a good cause ever knew, and hied home, when released by Mr. Lathrup, in unabated spirits, surrounded by a court of admiring boys.

His father was just alighting from his carriage at the gate as Don reached home. He looked at Don's swollen black-and-blue eye, at his torn and dirty clothes, and at first the old frown came. But Don's one eye looked honestly and fearlessly at his father, and there was no air of shame about him.

"Well, Don," he said, "what have you been doing now? You hardly look like a respectable man's son."

"I 've been fighting Bill Schraider, father," began Don, eagerly. "I could n't help it. I had to, and —"

"Did you whip him?" broke in his father.

"Almost. I would quite, if Mr. Lathrup had n't come out a little too soon."

"Good!" exclaimed his father, "I 'm glad of it!"

And they went into the house together, the Doctor listening to the details of the battle with all the interest of a boy.

"Lo, the Conquering Hero comes!" cried the Doctor, as he ushered Don into the dining-room.

Annie Dixie Lane

"Mercy! what *have* you been doing, Don?" exclaimed his mother, horrified at his looks.

"He has been celebrating your birthday like a good knight of old," said his father, laughing; "fighting oppressors and killing giants, in honor of his 'ladye faire.'"

Mrs. Brown still looked doubtful, even after hearing the whole story.

"I don't see how Don could well help himself; but I must say I don't like it. Fighting seems so low and brutal, so animal."

"I should be very sorry," said the Doctor, "to have Don pick quarrels, fight for the sake of fighting, or lay his hand on a boy younger or smaller than himself. But I would n't own him for a son if he would n't fight when necessary, either in self-defence, or to protect the weak against the persecutions of street and school bullies. I am a decided believer in 'muscular Christianity,' mother."

And the Doctor, in great spirits, indulged in reminiscences of various feats he had performed in his own boyhood, as profitable, perhaps, as they certainly were interesting to Don.

When evening came, Dr. and Mrs. Brown, as the audience, were escorted with much ceremony to two large easy-chairs, arranged to front the piano and the hall door. Programmes, highly decorated with red ink, were handed them, which read as follows: —

PROGRAMME. JUNE 18, 18—.

"*The Day we Celebrate.*"

MUSIC	*Miss C. Brown.*
RECITATION	*Miss Baby Brown.*
MUSIC	*Miss N. Brown.*
ORATION	*Mr. D. Brown.*
ORIGINAL ODE	*Miss N. Brown.*
SONG: "The Sweet By and By"	*The Brown Family.*
PRESENTATION	*Mr. D. Brown.*

The entertainment was a great success. The audience were enthusiastic, and the performers enjoyed their own efforts quite as much as the audience. Such flourishing bows, such grand sweeping prima-donna courtesies, as were made as each one entered from the hall green-room upon the parlor stage!

Baby Brown with great earnestness recited these verses: —

"I must not speak a naughty word,
  I must not tell a lie;
I must not contradict, and make
  My little sister cry.

Mary Toney

"And if I have a piece of cake,
When I with children play,
I must not eat it all myself,
But give a part away."

Of the "Original Ode," Dr. Brown truly said that its sentiments fully covered any deficiencies in rhyme and metre.

Don showed how genius can triumph over obstacles, as, with his black eye bandaged in raw beef, he made even Nan forget to giggle at his looks while he recited "The Charge of the Light Brigade."

When the children, Baby and all, stood by the piano and sang the words from "Sunny Side," set to "The Sweet By and By," —

"Oh, the years they are gliding away,
And they bear all the children along:
. . . .
We 'll be women and men by and by,
Taking up all the burdens of life;
But with hearts beating hopefully high,
We 'll go forth to the toil and the strife," —

tears, which had not been far away all the evening, filled Mrs. Brown's eyes. She looked at the dear faces, and thought how soon indeed the gliding years would bear all the children away, — how quickly the time would come when, scattered perhaps over the world, the old home where they were young together would be only a memory. God care for them, when other father and mother love should be no more!

Don had intended to make an elaborate presentation speech; but when the time came, he broke down, and only said, "This is from us all, mother, with our best love," — an address, if short, yet genuine. Mrs. Brown was delighted with the picture itself, but far more with the loving thought of her children that had led them to deny themselves to gratify her tastes.

"It is such a restful picture," she said. "When I have been hurried and tired all day, I shall sit in the evening and rest myself looking at it. But, Don, your programme omits one interesting exercise."

"Why, what? The 'Presentation' is the last thing, you know."

"Oh, no, it is n't. 'Refreshments, by Mrs. Brown,' should have been added," said his mother, smiling, as at this moment Bridget, all smiles, entered with cake and ice-cream, — a surprise most agreeable to the children.

"Your part of the programme was the best of all, mother," said Don, as he finished his second saucer of ice-cream.

"Wait until you hear mine," said his father. "Your mother was mistaken. There is yet another exercise on the programme. 'Grand and General Surprise, by Dr. Brown!'"

Curiosity was wide awake now, surmising what papa's surprise could possibly be.

"It's a present for mamma, of course," said Nan. "I know, — diamond ear-rings!"

"Hardly," said papa, laughing.

"Books, I guess," said Celia. "That set of the poets she has had to pine for in vain, because we had not money enough to buy both that and the engraving."

"Something very nice for Baby," guessed Don, who knew the sort of present most sure to please mother.

"Don is the warmest," said the Doctor, adopting the language of "Hunt the Thimble;" "but you're all decidedly cold. Come out on the balcony, where we can get a breath of air, and I'll tell you all about it."

The long parlor windows opened upon a small balcony. Turning the gas low, they carried chairs and hassocks out, and sat here, as they often did on summer evenings.

It was a very warm night, after a day of intolerable heat. Every one up and down the street was sitting out, on steps and porches. Fans were waving briskly, neighbors chatted back and forth from adjoining doorsteps, children ran and played up and down the pavement. Several pianos mingled their notes in one distracting jingle, and from up the street came the mellow note of the ice-cream man. The red lights of the corner drug-store glared oppressively bright, and the unceasing clink of tumblers on the marble made one tired, in sympathy with the perspiring boy who tended the soda-fountain. In short, the street, which had been quiet and deserted during the heat of the day, was now noisier than at any other hour. Everybody and everything had come to life again with the setting of the sun.

"Baby ought to have been in bed long ago," said Mrs. Brown. "But it is useless to take her up yet. I can't close the windows, and she is so nervous since her sickness, it is impossible to get her to sleep while the street is so noisy. I never dreaded the summer as I do this year. I seem to feel the heat and noise more than usual, for some reason."

"Because you are worn out, below par," said the Doctor. "Right here my surprise comes in. I heard to-day that the suit about my land out in Iowa, which has been hanging along for years, has finally been decided in my favor in the last Court of Appeals. And yesterday Griffin, who it seems has come into a fortune rather unexpectedly, came to me most honorably, and paid that old bill of his in full, with interest. I had given that up, long ago. So I feel quite rich to-day, which is much the same as if I were."

"It *must* be a new black silk," whispered Nan to Celia.

"Hush!" said Celia. "Do go on, papa, and relieve our suspense!"

"For once in our lives," said her father, "we will be extravagant — in an economical way. Your mother and Baby both need a change, and I am going to send them to the sea-shore and the East for the summer."

This announcement created all the commotion Dr. Brown had expected.

"What will become of us?" asked Nan and Don together, rather blankly.

Celia said nothing, because she was bracing herself inwardly to be self-denying, and to do her best to make it easy for mother to go.

"It is impossible," said Mrs. Brown, decidedly. "I should like nothing better, of course, especially on Baby's account; but I cannot leave the others for a whole summer. It is impossible."

"I know it," said her husband; "so I am going to send them all along with you. As I said, we will be extravagant for once."

"Oh! oh! oh!" cried Nan, hopping about and clapping her hands for joy, until she was brought to herself by seeing that several children were stopping on the pavement in wonder, to watch her performances. "Oh, it's too good to be true," she exclaimed, as she subsided upon her hassock.

"Do you really mean it? Are you in earnest, father?" asked Celia.

"I should say that was a surprise," said Don, who felt as if he must go away somewhere and turn a few somersaults in private, to relieve his feelings.

Marian Ryan

"But what will become of you?" asked Mrs. Brown, who was the only one to remember the father whose hard work had earned them the great pleasure in prospect.

"Bridget will take good care of me," said her husband. "Besides, I mean to take a vacation myself this year, and join you at the sea-shore for two or three weeks. I have agreed to take care of Parsons' patients while he goes to Put-in-Bay with his wife; so he will return the favor in my absence."

"That is the best part of all," said Mrs. Brown; and all the children agreed with her.

The Browns sat up late that evening, talking over their summer plans. Stanford was to spend the larger part of his summer vacation camping out in Maine with a party of fellow-students, but would meet them somewhere while East. Rocky Point, at the breezy tip of Cape Ann, was the resort which Dr. Brown had selected. After staying here a few weeks, they were to visit Mrs. Brown's parents at Meadow Brook, Massachusetts, returning home in September in season for the reopening of the schools.

Although the young Browns sat up that evening so late that even the neighboring doorsteps grew deserted, the pianos ceased jingling, the gas-lights began to gleam from upper windows, and the quiet street showed that the great city was composing itself for the night, it was yet later before they fell asleep, so excited were they over the coming delights of the summer.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BROWNS PREPARE TO TRAVEL.

IT is easy to be good when one is perfectly happy; so at least the Browns found it. Everything that had been hard, disagreeable, and unendurable seemed suddenly to disappear, to cease to exist, because a great flood-tide of joy lifted them above the power of small things to annoy. No one minded the heat, no matter how near one hundred the mercury persistently hovered. Indeed, they enjoyed it, by contrast with their coming coolness.

"Only think, Celia," said Nan, radiantly, as she came in with so red a face that Celia rose to give her the coolest place by the window, where the south breeze would have blown in had there been any south breeze,—"only think, it's ninety-eight this minute by our thermometer! Won't it be just delicious at the sea-shore? I can hardly wait till I get there."

"I can imagine I smell the salt air now," said Celia.

"The girls at school just envy me," said Nan: "I mean those who are not going East for the summer. Birdie Foulard is going to Europe this summer; but I don't envy her. I would n't change my summer for any one's. Lou Kibby says —"

"Oh, don't tell me anything that Lou Kibby says!" exclaimed Celia, impatiently.

"Just let me tell you this, Celia. She is going to Lake Chautauqua for August, and she is having eight new dresses made!"

"Well, what of it?"

"Why, you know I'm having nothing new but that blue-flannel sailor suit. After Lou had described all her dresses, she said, 'What are you having for party dresses, Nan?' 'Nothing at all,' I said. 'How do you expect to attend the hops then?' she asked. I said we were n't going to a hotel, and that papa would n't let me go to hops, anyway. She said she should n't care to go East at all, in that sort of way. But I'm satisfied; are n't you, Celia?"

"Yes," said Celia, "I am, if by 'satisfied'

Edith Leonard

you mean being happier than I ever was before in my life!"

Dr. Brown, in announcing his plans, had said, "Girls, you must understand that while I can afford to send you to the sea-shore, I cannot afford a quantity of new clothes for the occasion. As I said before, we must be extravagant in an economical, simple way. Everything for health and real comfort, — nothing for mere show; no fuss and feathers. I send you there solely for a healthful, natural, out-door life." And the girls had said, "Oh, you know, papa, we don't care for clothes, if we can only go."

While Celia and Nan were talking, Don came in.

"Oh, Don," said Celia, "won't you go up to Shillito's, and get a yard and three quarters more of this cloth, and two spools of blue sewing-silk to match, and a piece of skirt-braid, and some black elastic? Here's the list and samples. Please hurry, for we need some of the things right away."

Don was warm, and it was a long hot walk up Seventh Street to Shillito's. Besides, doing errands at dry-goods stores was his special detestation. But to-day he said alertly, "All right; where 's your flummery?" and went cheerfully out again in the hot sun. Was it not all helping on the grand trip?

"Many hands make light work." Every one was so willing and helpful that the work of preparation went briskly on. They were to start as soon as Don's school closed. The days and weeks seemed, especially to Don and Nan, to crawl along slowly, as if intentionally to try their patience. Don often asked, "Don't you want the trunks brought down, mother? I should think it was time to begin packing."

But at last the reluctant weeks were forced to bring around even the close of Don's school. He passed a fair examination for the Intermediate School, having brought even his grammar up to a decent average by the determined study of the last few weeks. When he took hold of it willingly and in earnest, it was astonishing how much easier it became. And at last came the time when his mother said, "Well, Don, the trunks must come down to-day."

"That sounds something like it," said Don. "Now I begin to feel as if we were really going."

Don was full of helpfulness, as was every one else; all had come in to "help mother pack." Poor Mrs. Brown, almost distracted by innumerable questions, stood in the centre of the room, gazing about her in dismay at the stacks of clothes, — on bed, chairs, tables, even on the floor, — the books, boxes, hats, bonnets, shoes, parasols, toys, what not, that some whirlwind seemed to have deposited around her.

"I can't get half these things into three trunks, I am sure," she exclaimed. "I hardly know where to begin."

"Oh, we'll all help you, mother," said Don, seizing an armful of clean, carefully laundered garments from the bed, and pitching them into a trunk. "I'll pack this trunk myself."

"Don!" cried Celia, "don't! You've nearly ruined my best white dress, mussing it all up so."

"Boys don't know how to pack," said Nan. "Of course the boxes and such things have to go on the bottom." And she began pulling out the clothes with quite as disastrous an effect on them as Don's "packing."

Baby, meantime, was trotting about, availing herself of the general confusion to wear Celia's best hat, unnoticed, — a privilege that she had long desired in vain. Don spied her, snatched her up, and clapping her in the big Saratoga trunk, shut the lid.

"There, that trunk's packed," he said.

A loud wail of distress attracted attention to the trunk. Celia rushed to the rescue, and lifted the lid to behold, with horror, her best hat bobbing about by some invisible means.

"Baby Brown! My best hat!" she cried.

"Me big lady, doin' travellin'," explained Baby, when rescued from under the hat.

"Children, children!" cried Mrs. Brown, at the very verge of her patience. "I cannot do anything in this uproar; I cannot even think. The only way you can help me is to go out and leave me alone. Celia, do take Baby out and keep her somewhere. Come, Don, Nan, vanish!"

This way of helping was not at all to the children's taste. But out they had to go, and mother even locked the door after them, — a wise precaution, as more than once did Don or Nan come and beg to be let in.

"We will be as still as mice; we won't ask a single question; we will help hand you the things. *Please* let us in, mother!"

But mother hardened her heart and stood firm; else it is quite certain the packing would never have been completed, — as it was, eventually.

At last, in spite of the children's certainty that the eventful day would never come, the morning of the journey actually dawned. The trunks, all strapped, stood waiting in the hall, with a formidable array of baskets and other hand-luggage, including a quart can of milk for Baby. The Browns, in travelling array, sat in the dismantled parlor, whence curtains, ornaments, etc., had been removed and packed safely away for the summer, waiting for the railroad omnibus.

One might fancy sometimes that houses become attached to their occupants. Certainly the Browns' house already wore a desolate, deserted look, as if forlorn at seeing depart the lively young folk who had filled every inch of it with happy life and stir.

Dr. Brown was giving his last counsels.

"Each one of you must understand what you are to take charge of, and be responsible for that, so that your mother need have no care of anything but the baby. Children can be either the greatest helps or the greatest nuisances in travelling. I 've seen both kinds. I want you to be the first. Now, remember. Mother will take the baby ; Don, the large valise ; Nan, the shawl-strap and small bag ; Celia, the lunch-basket, fans, and books. Now, who will carry the milk-can ? Don't all speak at once."

They did n't. There was a dead silence. Evidently every one shrank from the milk-can.

" Travelling is the strongest possible test of people's politeness and breeding," said their father, smiling at their reluctance, "as you will see if you observe your fellow-travellers. You remember the baby's little verse, —

> 'Politeness is, to do and say
> The kindest thing in the kindest way.'

Politeness is only another name for unselfishness. Now, at the very outset of your journey, here is a test of you as travellers. Who is going to be the unselfish, truly polite traveller, and who the selfish, don't-care-for-anybody-but-himself traveller ? "

"We 'll take turns carrying it, papa," said Nan.

"I 'll take it," said Celia, with the solemn air of one who makes a great sacrifice.

"Pooh, I 'll take it myself," said Don, seizing the can. "It is n't going to kill any one to carry a milk-can."

"Very good, Don," said his father. "You girls will have a chance to show your politeness by relieving Don occasionally."

"I don't see why they don't come for the trunks," said Don, who had been for some time hearing the baggage wagon in every vehicle that passed the house. "I hope they have n't made any mistake. It 's eight o'clock now."

"What if the omnibus should forget to come for us? What should we do?" asked Nan, who, like Don, suffered from a secret fear that something might even yet prevent this trip which was "too good to be true."

"The good traveller," said the Doctor, "always takes Lincoln's advice, and never crosses a bridge until he comes to it. Keep cool; don't worry; don't borrow trouble about possible difficulties ahead, like this of the omnibus. If a difficulty comes, do your best to meet it when it comes, but don't worry about it beforehand. If the 'bus forgets you, Nan, we must do the next best thing. If you don't go to-day, there are other days coming, you know."

"Oh, I should die, I know I should, if I could n't go to-day."

"Here 's the baggage wagon now," announced Don, from his post at the window.

The baggage men laid violent hands on the trunks, tumbled them out end over end to the wagon, and tossed them in with a bang that threatened to take the bottoms out.

"They 'll last until they reach the Point, I guess," said the Doctor, answering his wife's look of dismay.

The omnibus saved Nan's life by appearing in due time; and at last they were off, a happy party, full of nods and smiles from the omnibus's rattling depths to the children on the sidewalk, Mrs. Leverich in her little store door, the drug-store man at his door, all of whom had come out to see the Browns off.

Bridget, who had carried the baby out herself, and wished them all the happiest of summers, with "tears in her eyes, but a smile on her mouth," went back alone into the silent house, which already echoed with emptiness.

"It's lonely I'll be this summer," thought she, as she shut the door with an echoing clang. "The work'll be easy, but it seems as if every one was dead, and the funeral had just gone out. I'd rather be bothered with the children, bless their dear souls, than to be killed with the lonesomeness."

The Doctor put them aboard the sleeping-car "Pocasset," which ran through to Boston without change. Fortunately, he had pre-engaged berths, as the tide of summer travel eastward was now at its height, and every berth was taken. The porter, who had undergone many and varied experiences with travelling families, frowned as the procession of Browns — Baby, milk-can, and all — filed past him into the car. His thoughts, put in words, would have been, "Another woman with a baby and a lot of children! Now my sorrows begin."

But he did not know the Browns.

"Don," said his father, "you are the man of the party. I depend on your taking good care of your mother and the girls. Remember, the only thing I forbid is going out on the platform when the cars are in motion. Whenever the cars stop long enough, you may get out and walk up and down near your car. Your mother had best let you keep your own ticket in your pocket, in case you should get left. But you must not get left. Your mother is not to worry or think about you at all. You are to be responsible for yourself, remember."

This gave Don an agreeable sense of his own manliness, and he resolved to merit his father's confidence.

The last load of trunks was hurried aboard, the engine bell began to ring, father kissed every one hurriedly, and went out. As the train moved slowly away, the last thing they saw was father — good, kind, self-denying father — standing on the platform, smiling and waving his hand after his dear ones. They never knew before how much they loved him. Already there began to be a little pull on the heart chords, as they sped farther and farther away from him, and thoughts of all the possible changes even a few weeks may bring crept into their reluctant hearts.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THEY TRAVEL.

SOBER thoughts do not tarry long in young minds. The Browns were soon diverted by Baby's joy at the swift motion, and her delight at all the cows, sheep, and other wonders her little fingers continually pointed out, as they swept swiftly on, — already out in the country, the familiar city streets left far behind.

Don and Nan settled back in their seats with the first solid sense of peace and rest they had experienced for weeks. They exchanged smiles of satisfaction.

"Well, we 've really started at last," said Don.

They took out the books brought to beguile the journey; but their attention was continually diverted either to something out of the window or to their fellow passengers. A lady near them, travelling with one child, a boy somewhat younger than Don, soon attracted their observation, and indeed that of all her fellow travellers. She was dressed in the extreme of fashion, — decidedly overdressed for travelling, in fact, — and all her appointments were of the latest and most expensive description. Evidently she cherished a high idea of the importance of Mrs. Van Cleff, and desired to impress that importance upon her fellow passengers. The porter was kept in constant attendance on her whims, and she expended more breath and worry on her one child, Clifford, than Mrs. Brown spent on her whole brood. She gave him a choice picture-book, and, composing herself with languid ease among the pillows the porter had just brought her, began reading a novel. Soon, however, the dialogue began between her and Clifford, to be continued, with variations, all day.

"Clifford, do sit still! You 're rubbing your shoes all over my dress."

"I'm hungry, mother; I want something to eat."

"Oh, Clifford, you can't be hungry yet."

"Yes, I am; I want something to eat."

"Sit still! I 'm not going to give you anything yet."

But Clifford persisted, until finally his mother yielded; told the porter to bring a table, and unpacked various goodies from the lunch-basket, which kept Clifford quiet a little while, but only a little while. He soon began his travels back and forth through the cars, to get a drink, to wash his hands, to sit on the coal-box, and so on. Losing his balance as the motion swayed him, he tumbled about, stepping on gentlemen's feet and knocking ladies' hats askew. He soon came to be considered an unmitigated nuisance by the passengers, who called him "that boy," and glanced impatiently at his mother, who made no effort at controlling him, beyond a feeble, complaining, occasional, "I *do* wish you would sit still, Clifford."

Finally, in one of his pilgrimages, he trod heavily on his mother's foot.

"You bad, naughty boy!" she exclaimed, seizing him and jamming him down upon his chair. "There! Now sit still! Don't you dare to stir out of that chair!"

"Can't I go and sit on the coal-box?"

"No. Sit still, I tell you!"

"I do want to sit on the coal-box," whined Clifford.

"Well, go along, then. I don't care what you do, so you don't bother me."

Clifford went, and his mother settled herself to the enjoyment of her novel. A general sensation was soon created, however, by the return of Clifford, hatless and crying, pushed along by the porter.

"You 'd better look after this boy of yours, ma'am. He was out on the platform just now, and he 'll get killed, first you know."

Clifford's eyes were full of cinders, and his straw hat had blown off, over fields already miles behind. Let us hope that it was found by some poor boy who needed a new hat.

His mother scolded him soundly, and Clifford cried hard, and made a general disturbance, only to be allayed by cake and bananas from the lunch-basket. The floor of Mrs. Van Cleff's seat, strewn with crumbs, fruit-skins, and nutshells, like a menagerie cage, reminded one how slight, after all, is the dividing line between human beings and animals.

The train stopped at Delaware ten minutes, and many of the passengers walked up and down the car, or station platform outside, to rest.

Seeing that Don was going out, Mrs. Van Cleff asked Mrs. Brown, "Would your son be willing to take charge of my little boy? He wants to get out and walk up and down, and I don't dare trust him alone."

After the boys had gone out, she continued, "What a help your son is to you! He waits on you so nicely, and takes care of you as if he were a man. None of your children seem to be any trouble. It 's so nice. I wish Clifford were that way. But there 's such a difference in children."

She soon changed the topic, however, to narratives revealing incidentally the grandeur of her house, her carriage, the number of servants she kept, etc., varied with particulars of Mr. Van Cleff's tastes in various articles of diet, all in a tone distinctly audible through the car.

Mrs. Brown listened to these confidences with, it is to be feared, a feigned air of polite attention, until luckily Baby, who had curled up like a little kitten on the seat and taken a long nap, woke, sweet, rosy, and good-natured. More than one baby-lover came and tried to win her friendship, but coy Baby Brown hid her face on her mother's shoulder, and kept all her favors for the home friends.

Mrs. Brown now had a moment's fright. The train was evidently about starting, but Don and Clifford had not returned. Before it was well under headway Don appeared, looking much disturbed.

"Clifford 's left," he said. "I could n't make him come along. He would stop to buy some peanuts. I was almost left myself, waiting for him."

Now there was a general commotion and excitement. Mrs. Van Cleff was frantic. Some of the gentlemen in pity came to her aid, and induced the conductor to back the short distance to the station. Clifford, in a baggy old silk cap the porter had loaned him, was the observed of the whole train, as the portly, red-faced conductor, not without some profanity, seized him and hustled him aboard none too tenderly.

After her flurry was over, and she had relieved her feelings by scolding Clifford,—who appeared to shed scoldings as a duck's back sheds water, —Mrs. Van Cleff seemed to feel a certain pride in his exploit.

"I never saw such a boy in my life," she said to Mrs. Brown. "There 's never any knowing what he will do next. How his father will laugh when I write him about Clifford's latest performance, — stopping a whole railroad train!"

The afternoon was very warm, and the scenery of northern Ohio monotonous. The novelty of travelling had also worn off. The children already began to tire of it. They would hardly have known how to kill time but for Baby, who, fresh and lively from her nap, was full of play, and amused the whole car with her cunning tricks and pretty ways.

Every one was glad when the long hot day at last ended, the sun set, and the porter, fastening the doors back, let the cool evening breeze from the lake sweep through the close, heated car. As soon as the berths were made up, the weary passengers tumbled in, and would soon have been asleep, from sheer fatigue, in spite of their discomfort, had not the silence of the car been broken by the voices of a party of young women who had boarded the train late in the afternoon. It was evidently their first experience in a sleeping-car.

"Delia, are you asleep?" called one to her friend in the berth opposite, in so audible a voice that all the sleepy and sleeping passengers were aroused.

"No; are you?"

"No; is Bertha asleep?"

"No, indeed," struck in another shrill voice. "I don't see how any one can sleep in this sardine-box."

A chorus of giggles from the quartette.

"What's become of Rosie?"

"Oh, I'm here. Where did you suppose I was?"

"You were so still I thought you'd gone to sleep."

"Oh, no; I'm improving my mind listening to your conversation."

"Don't be so sarcastic."

"I say, girls," said Rosie, who seemed to be regarded as the wit of the party, "let's make a regular lark of this. Let's not go to sleep at all. Let's get up and dress, and —"

But here, in a gruff masculine voice, from behind curtains near by, came an imperative call.

"Porter!"

"Sah?"

"Can't you stop the tongues of those women? I've paid for a berth in the sleeping-car to *sleep*, and I don't propose to be kept awake all night by this eternal gabble."

"Ladies," said the porter, "you really must keep still. The passengers won't stand it."

The "ladies" subsided, and the roar and motion of the train soon lulled every one into an uneasy semi-sleep. The cars sped on, on, through the darkness, over rivers, along perilous embankments, through sleeping villages; and the unconscious passengers slept on, in utter helplessness, wholly dependent on the watchful eye, the ready hand, the quick, strained senses of the one plain man in the engine cab. Look respectfully upon the roughly dressed man who leans out of the cab at the stopping-places. If sudden danger comes, under that rough exterior may be found one of the world's heroes, who shall stand at his post with his hand on the brake, and go down to certain death, if so he can save the lives in his charge.

CHAPTER XIX.

THEY ENCOUNTER AN "ONLY."

THE Browns awoke the next morning in New York State. Nan woke first. She sat up and drew the curtain, careful not to disturb Celia, who was still sleeping, though in evident discomfort. It was very early morning, much earlier than Nan was in the habit of rising, — a lovely summer's morning. The tree shadows lay long on the dewy grass, smoke curled up from farm-house chimneys, and farmers were just beginning to stir in the day's work.

Nan had never experienced so fascinating a sensation as this swift rush on through new, ever-changing landscapes, which glided by the car window like a panorama of green hills, clear streams, canal-boats plodding along with a certain picturesqueness of their own, fields where frisky colts and calves kicked up their heels and scampered away, farm-houses where children played, and cool depths of woods.

"How many people there are in the world!" she said to Celia, who was just awaking, feeling as if she possessed several new bones, inconveniently located.

"What put that wise idea into your head?"

"Oh, I could n't help thinking of it, just now. We passed close by such a pleasant-looking little house. The mother stood in the porch, under the vines, with the baby in her arms, talking to the father, who was just starting off to his work, and some little children were playing with a big dog in the yard. We just glanced by in a minute. I never saw them before, and I shall never see them again. And there they 've been living all these years. And they 're of just as much consequence to themselves as we are to ourselves. That made me think how full the world is of people that we don't know anything about, all just as important as we are, when we feel as if we were the chief ones. You need n't laugh, Celia. I can't express it very well, but I know what I mean."

"I 'm glad of it," said Celia, in a muffled tone, she being half-way under the berth, in a vain hunt for one of her shoes.

They finally made their toilets, under difficulties, and emerged from their curtains, to find that Don and Clifford had been up a long time, so long that they had enjoyed the privilege of seeing the porter black the shoes. They were full of information.

"We don't have breakfast until we get to Syracuse, at nine o'clock," they said.

"Dear me, we shall faint away," said Nan.

Celia brought crackers from the lunch-basket to sustain them until breakfast. But Clifford declined the crackers.

"I don't feel very well," he said. "I 've only eaten a piece of cake, and some candy and peanuts this morning, but I don't feel as if I wanted a bit of breakfast."

It was a pleasant change at last to get out at Syracuse for breakfast. The waiter brought a high-chair and glass of milk for Baby, and there was everything nice, from strawberries and oatmeal at the beginning, to waffles and maple syrup at the close, and plenty of time in which to eat it. Nevertheless, when the conductor announced

"Syracuse! Twenty minutes for breakfast!" some of the passengers had made a frantic, headlong rush for the dining-room, with the air of never having had a meal before and never expecting to have another. When seated, they shovelled in their food wildly, glaring about the table, as they ate, to see if any choice morsel had escaped their vigilance, never offering to pass anything to any one else. One half expected to hear them grunt, and see them put their feet in their plates, so little way seemed they to have evolved from their original animal condition, so recently had they apparently graduated from their native pigsties.

Don, who was only a boy, and hungry at that, caught the infection, and fell to, as if every moment were his last.

"Don, dear," said his mother, "don't hurry so. There is plenty of time. See the conductors at that table opposite. They are not hurrying. The train certainly will not go without them."

So Don lessened his speed, and found that he had ample time even to eat all the waffles he wanted, before the man at the door shouted, "All aboard for Troy, Boston, and the East!"

The Browns returned to the "Pocasset," which now seemed a second home to them, much refreshed by their breakfasts, and full of animated interest in their new surroundings and lively chat with one another.

"I can hardly realize that we shall see Stanford to-day," said Mrs. Brown.

Stanford was to meet them in Boston. He had not been home since Christmas, and seeing Stanford was a delight anticipated only second to the sea-shore.

"He wrote he would take us about Boston," said Celia.

"We don't reach Boston until five o'clock," said Mrs. Brown; "but if you are up early to-morrow morning you will have considerable time for sight-seeing before our train leaves."

"Ah, there 's no danger, mother. We 're sure to be up early to-morrow," said Don.

"Papa must be just setting out on his round of visits now," said Nan. "How far away home seems, and how long since we left it!"

So they chatted, while on sped the train through the heart of great, rich, luxuriant New York. The farther east they went, the more picturesque grew the scenery. The hills rose up bolder and more mountainous, and at last Mrs. Brown exclaimed, "Ah, there are pines again."

"Why, they grow wild in the woods!" exclaimed Nan, who in Ohio had only seen evergreens as cultivated on lawns.

"It seems almost like a waste," said Celia. "How much Mr. Holbrook would give if he could transplant to his grounds that lovely group of pines, with those picturesque rocks under them all overgrown with —"

"Wild clematis and woodbine," said Mrs. Brown.

"Rivers are much more interesting in reality than they look on maps," observed Nan, as they sped along the banks of the lovely Mohawk. "In the geography the Mohawk is just a little black streak. Who would suppose it was so pretty? See those islands!"

"I should like to travel out all my geography instead of studying it," said Don. "It would be lots more fun."

Clifford, who had been very quiet all the morning, lying down and looking pale, was now seized with violent nausea. When he was once more composed, his mother said to Mrs. Brown, who had rendered what assistance she could, "I don't see what ails this child. His stomach is so terribly delicate. He always gets sick travelling. Your children seem so bright and well."

"Perhaps one reason," Mrs. Brown ventured to suggest, "is because I keep them to regular meal-times, as at home, and don't let them eat candy and other unwholesome things."

"Oh, I don't think so," said Mrs. Van Cleff. "Clifford has always been so delicate. There 's such a difference in children."

Here Clifford struck in fretfully, "I want some ice-cream, mother."

"Why, Clifford, you know I can't get ice-cream on the cars."

"I don't care. I do want some ice-cream. I can't think of anything else I want to eat." And Clifford began to cry.

This brought his mother to terms at once.

"Now, Clifford, don't cry, that 's a good boy; and I 'll see if the porter can't get you some ice-cream at Albany."

"I don't like to cross him," she confided to Mrs. Brown, "he 's such a nervous child. He gets his temperament from me. I was always just so myself. Now, his father — " And then followed interesting details of Mr. Van Cleff's constitution and personal habits, told so loudly as to enlighten the whole car about much of that gentleman's habits and private history.

The train here suddenly stopped. No station was in sight.

"What 's the matter?" asked every one.

"Only a hot box," said the porter.

This caused quite a delay, during which the passengers rambled about, picking wild-flowers. The intense stillness and the sweet odor of the clover fields were a most refreshing change from the incessant roar and car smoke, in which they seemed to have lived a week at least.

"Only" a hot box, the porter had said. But beware of an "only." A good many consequences sometimes hinge upon the insignificant *onlys*. In this case, the train, having lost its time by this delay, was obliged to lie by at switches, and yield the track to other trains. The Browns' tickets were by the Hoosac Tunnel route. They were therefore to change cars at Schenectady, but now found they would miss their connection.

"What are you going to do, mother?" asked Don.

"I hardly know, myself," said his mother, looking perplexed at this unexpected emergency. "I believe I will ask Mr. Grandin's advice."

Mr. Grandin was a Cincinnatian well known to Mrs. Brown by reputation; a gentleman of wealth, culture, and position, who devoted much of what might have been his elegant leisure to unpaid, often unthanked labors in promoting the higher welfare of his native city. He and his sister were going to Boston. Their quiet, refined manner furnished the greatest possible contrast to Mrs. Van Cleff's parade and consequential air, and illustrated well the difference between being and seeming. The Grandins were of real importance,—Mrs. Van Cleff wished to seem so. The fact that Mr. Grandin, who had been introduced by Dr. Brown to his wife, had occasionally stopped in passing to address a few civil words to Mrs. Brown, had caused that lady to be favored with many more of Mrs.

Van Cleff's confidences than her plain exterior would otherwise have commanded.

Mr. Grandin at once made Mrs. Brown's trouble his own. After consulting the conductor, he said, "The conductor says your best plan is to continue on this train to Albany, and there change for Troy. At Troy you will take the one o'clock express for Boston, which brings you into the city about eight this evening. I shall be most happy to assist you at Albany."

This kind assurance relieved the anxiety Mrs. Brown could but feel at the change of programme so suddenly forced upon her.

At Albany, after saying good-by to Mrs. Van Cleff, who expressed a strong desire for a continuance of the acquaintance, the Browns filed out of the car, each carrying his or her portion of the hand-luggage, — except that as Mr. Grandin insisted on relieving Don of the heavy valise, Don was able to devote his whole energies to the milk-can, to which he had now become quite hardened.

Mr. Grandin led the procession, made the necessary inquiries, and endured in their behalf what seems to be the necessary impertinence of uniformed railroad officials, supposed to be the servants of the public. When they were finally all safely aboard the Troy train, Mr. Grandin, after a courteous adieu, departed, leaving behind him a glow of gratitude and admiration that would have seemed to him quite disproportioned to the service rendered.

"What a very kind, polite gentleman he is!" said Nan. "He made me think of Mr. Greatheart in 'Pilgrim's Progress,' when he helps Christiana and her children along their journey. That cross man in the gold-banded cap would do very well for a lion or some other wild beast."

"Only Mr. Grandin ought to have slain him," said Don. "I thought it was awfully kind in him to lug that valise around for us."

"Don't you think, mother," asked Celia, "that it was really self-sacrificing for such an elegant gentleman to take so much trouble, and to burden himself with such a troop of us that he knew and cared nothing about, — never saw before?"

"*Noblesse oblige*," said Mrs. Brown. "He owed it to himself. I often think, when I see, as I frequently do, a gentleman rendering courtesies in travelling to old or feeble or ignorant people, that the race of knights-errant is not yet extinct. The duties of the modern knight are seldom poetical. He is not required to dash about on horseback, storming castles and rescuing lovely maidens at the lance's point. But the knightly spirit survives, and does as good, if humbler and less showy, service. I hope my own boys will be knights-errant, Douglases 'tender and true,' always ready to draw their swords to help the helpless," said Mrs. Brown, smiling at Don.

Don's eyes flashed, as if the idea touched a kindred spot in his soul; but he said nothing. Perhaps he remembered Mr. Grandin when, the car being crowded, he rose and gave his seat to an old Irishwoman with a big bundle; and perhaps Nan too thought of Mr. Greatheart as she courteously made room for her.

They found they had an hour to wait at Troy. The children rambled about the streets nearest the station, "travelling out more geography," as Nan said, until quite at home in the pretty city. They also dined here. It being a dull time between trains, the proprietress of the dining-room showed them every attention, admired the baby, and entered into all their affairs, past and present, with a kindly inquisitiveness that was really consoling, after all the browbeatings and snubbings they had received at Albany.

CHAPTER XX.

THEY GO ON.

AS they mounted the steep grade which takes the train up the hill east of Troy, a lovely view of the Hudson valley with the fair city in its midst, and glimpses of the Adirondacks, blue in the northern distance, unfolded before them. The day was pleasant, and, although warm, they already perceived, or thought they did, an under-breath of clearness and coolness, very different from the stifling midsummer atmosphere of southern Ohio.

"There is a Massachusetts air to-day," said Mrs. Brown.

"Don't speak of air until we reach the seashore," said Celia.

"If we ever do," said Nan, who was beginning to feel the fatigue of the long journey. "Stanford won't know what to think when we don't come on the five-o'clock train. We shall miss him, and not see him at all."

"You must remember your father's advice, Nan," said Mrs. Brown, "and not cross that bridge till you come to it."

"Humph," said Don, "I guess Stan can find us anywhere in Boston. What 'll you bet that the first person we see when we get out the train, is n't old Stan himself?"

"I don't believe we shall see him at all," persisted Nan, who felt like looking on the dark side.

"Worrying will certainly not help the matter, Nan," said her mother, "and will only make you unhappy. Soon now we shall go through the Hoosac Tunnel, of which you have talked so much."

Going through Williamstown, the Ohio children gazed with great interest on the spires and roofs of "Garfield's college," seen in the distance above and through the foliage of stately elms.

"Only think," said Don, "Garfield used to walk along these very roads and about these fields, and see these same great mountains!"

And Don looked with double respect at old Greylock and Saddleback, standing grand and solemn, with cloud shadows drifting down their rugged sides.

"He was only a young man then, no different, apparently, from the others," said Celia. "How little he imagined all that was coming to him!"

"'For God, through ways they have not known,
Will lead his own,'"

said Mrs. Brown. "Garfield was a knight, a 'Douglas, tender and true.' Some of his sayings have a noble ring to them. Do you remember any, Don, from your 'Garfield's Words'?"

"Two," said Don, quoting. "I would rather be beaten in Right than succeed in Wrong;" and, "There are some things I am afraid to do,—I am afraid to do a mean thing."

"'The Knight's bones are dust,
And his good sword rust;
His soul is with the saints, I trust,'"

quoted Celia, in a low tone, and for a few moments they were all silent.

Before long they were plunging in under the great Hoosac Mountain, like mice creeping under a house, so tiny looked the train venturing into the little hole under this immense, overhanging mass of rock and earth.

Mrs. Brown looked at her watch as they entered the Tunnel. The lamps in the car were but a feeble substitute for sunlight, and the car seemed dim and gloomy, as they plunged on, on, in the dense darkness. Nan felt nervous. They seemed so small, so insignificant and helpless. What were one or two hundred puny human beings to the mountain over them? It could crush them all, and never care.

"I 'm sure we 've been in here half an hour," said Nan. "Can you see the time, mother?"

"Exactly five minutes since we entered," said her mother.

"Five minutes!" exclaimed the children. "What makes it seem so awfully long?"

"The darkness, the fact that you see nothing to divert your minds. You can fancy now, Don, something what one day's solitary confinement in a dark cell would seem like. You know you said the other day you did n't think that much of a punishment."

"I 've changed my mind now. I should n't think a fellow would ever live through it; or if he did, I believe his hair would be gray with old age. How long is this tunnel, anyway, mother?"

"It is four and three quarters miles long, and it was twenty years in building, — not twenty years of steady work, of course, for there were many delays, difficulties, and stops. I remember," said Mrs. Brown, whose early home was in this region, "when I was a little girl, hearing so much about the Tunnel, and all the difficulties and troubles attending its construction. Few people expected it would ever be finished. I certainly never expected to be riding through it myself, especially with such a troop of children."

"It seems so funny, mother, to think there ever was a time when you did n't have us," said Nan.

In ten minutes after entering, they emerged from the Tunnel into daylight again, — daylight that at first dazzled their blinded eyes. Then they ran a race down the mountain with the Deerfield River, plunging around rocky curves with a velocity that threw the passengers about, even making some of them slightly sea-sick.

The road followed the windings of the river, among the spurs of the mountains which Vermont, from her superabundance, sends over the line into Massachusetts. The views were a perpetually changing panorama of wild, picturesque beauty; and the older passengers imitated the Western children in changing from side to side of the cars, "Oh"-ing and "Ah"-ing as one lovely vista after another dawned upon them.

Mrs. Brown pointed out objects of interest and gave information with the air of one who owns it all. Was it not her own Franklin County? She felt akin to the very soil, to every rock, pine-tree, sumach bush, wild grape-vine, and mountain-laurel bloom, along the route. What associations the old familiar names of the stations had for her, of a girlhood long past, of days, friends, feelings, forever vanished! But the merry children knew nothing of the thoughts filling their mother's mind, could not even have understood them, had she tried to impart them.

"This is the prettiest river I ever saw," said Don. "It is so clear and bright, and jumps over the rocks and stones as if it were trying to outrun us. You can see every pebble on the bottom. I should like to fish in that river."

The Deerfield was, indeed, a great contrast to the yellow, muddy Western rivers, whose turbidness shows, it is true, the richness of the soil they are ever sweeping away into the Mississippi, but almost wholly destroys their beauty as streams.

As the long, warm afternoon wore on, the fatigue of the journey began to tell on the whole party. Every one had a headache, except Don and the baby. But Baby was uneasy and hard to amuse, just when no one felt like making any effort to entertain her. Celia was trying to read a magazine. Baby kept pulling on her, and climbing up on her, as if Celia had been a new variety of tree, then sliding down to the floor to pull and climb up again, sadly wrinkling the neat gray travelling-dress.

"Dear me, Nan," exclaimed Celia, fretfully, "I do think you might help take care of Baby a little. She has pulled me to fragments the last half-hour, and I 'm nearly distracted."

"I 'm tired to death, and my head aches," said Nan, crossly, leaning back in her seat with an air of suffering more than any one else.

"So does my head ache, as if it would burst. You don't suppose you 're the only one that 's tired, do you? I must say, I think you're extremely selfish."

Nan was about to reply with a degree of spirit hardly to be expected in her prostrate condition, when their mother interfered.

"Don't dispute, dears," she said. "Of course we are all very tired, but if we can still keep good-natured and pleasant, that will help a little, I am sure. Come, Baby, mamma will show you some pictures."

But Mrs. Brown's pale face and the blue circles around her eyes showed that she too had a headache, and the girls well knew what one of mother's sick-headaches was. Nan suddenly remembered what her father had said about the unselfish, truly polite traveller, —

> "Politeness is, to do and say
> The kindest thing in the kindest way."

"I don't want you to take Baby, mother," said Nan. "I'll take her over to that vacant seat on the shady side, and show her things out of the window. Come, darling, and Nan will tell you pretty stories."

Tired, cross little Baby responded gladly to her sister's pleasant voice, and cuddled down in

Nan's lap as still as a wee mouse, while Nan made up a story about some children they saw in a boat on a little pond. Baby sat so still that Nan, surprised, looking down, found the little creature fast asleep, — floated off to dreamland in Nan's boat. This was such a blessing! Now every one could rest; and Baby, after a nice nap, would wake fresh and blooming for Boston and Stanford.

Nan made a nice bed on the seat, laid her precious bundle carefully down, and was now free to nurse her own sorrows. But the effort to entertain Baby had made her forget herself, and it was surprising how much better she felt than when doing nothing, brooding over her own miseries and discomforts. Besides, she had the approval of her conscience. So she was all animation when Don, who had been at the end of the car, came back to tell them, "The next place is Concord, girls."

"Concord!" exclaimed Celia. "Oh, we must look out and try to imagine which is Emerson's house!"

"Emerson!" said Nan. "Miss Alcott's, you mean."

"And the Old Manse," continued Celia.

"And the bridge where 'the embattled farmers stood,'" said Don. The children gazed with reverence at the white houses of the far-famed village, even at the railway station where so many of the world's famous ones had alighted and embarked, and kept their eyes open for Walden Pond.

"Let 's begin to pack up," said Don. "We shall be in Boston in about an hour."

They packed away shawls, books, cups, and so on, feeling that they were thus somehow hastening the time of their arrival. It was fortunate, however, they did so; for as they neared Boston they were too excited to do anything but peer out through the dusk of the summer evening at the novel scenes around them.

"What is that tall pole sticking up over there?" asked Nan.

"Why, if that is n't the mast of a ship, a real ship!" exclaimed Don.

"And this is really the ocean!" exclaimed Nan, looking with delight at the rather dirty water that lapped against the causeway. But it was salt water all the same, — a bit of the genuine ocean, and the first the Western children had ever seen; so already they began to feel the fascination of the sea. Now sailing-craft of all sorts and sizes thickened around them, and before they knew it they were steaming into the Fitchburg Station.

Getting out of the cars with something of the lost, forlorn feeling one has in reaching a strange city at night, straining their eyes through the twilight, in the vain hope of seeing Stanford, — who is this tall young man with the smiling face that pounces upon them from the direction in which they are not looking, kisses his mother and the girls, slaps Don on the back with a hearty "Hello, old fellow," and takes the baby out of mother's tired arms, all well-nigh before they know it?

"What did I tell you, Nan?" asked Don.

It was surprising how safe and at home they all felt, now Stanford had taken command of them.

"I have a carriage engaged, mother, to take you right up to the Tremont House. I knew you would all be tired."

"I don't see how you knew we were coming on this train," said Nan.

"Oh, I supposed of course you had missed your connection somehow, and I 've kept a lookout for you ever since, although I hardly expected you before eight."

"It is such a comfort to see you again," said his mother, leaning on his arm, and looking up with fond pride to this tall son, head and shoulders above her.

Baby, who remembered the big brother well as the merriest of playfellows, hid her face on his shoulder, peeping out coyly at him now and then with coquettish airs of affected shyness that made them all laugh. They all felt proud of this tall brother.

"Don," whispered Nan, "do you see, Stanford has a mustache and carries a cane!"

"Of course," said Don; "is n't he a sophomore?"

Even the excitement of meeting Stanford could not keep them long from their slumbers. Immediately after supper they were glad to go to their rooms, and "sleep in a bed once more," as Nan said.

CHAPTER XXI.

THEY ARRIVE.

THE young Browns were among the first arrivals in the breakfast-room the next morning. Mrs. Brown was to take a later breakfast, and meet them on the Common, near the Frog Pond, about half-past eight.

Here the children found her, sitting on a bench in the pleasant shade, while Baby was showing an inherited love for the very soil of Massachusetts by persisting in picking up gravel to eat, as she trotted about.

The young folks all looked as fresh and bright as the morning itself.

"We 've been all over Boston, mother," said Nan.

"Not exactly," said Stanford, laughing; "but we 've done pretty well for the time."

"We 've been on top of the State House, and looked all over Boston, anyway," said Don.

"And seen Horace Mann's statue and the sacred codfish," said Celia.

"And the Old South Church, and all the curiosities exhibited in it," added Nan.

"And walked all through the Public Gardens," said Don.

"What a pleasant city Boston is! I don't see why Boston people ever want to go away for the summer," said Celia, gazing admiringly up and down the long walks of the Common, shaded with old elms meeting in grand arches overhead. The sun's rays hardly flickered through the dense foliage, and people going to their day's work sauntered slowly, or sat on benches in the shade reading their "Advertisers" and "Posts" to the accompaniment of bird music. On the hill above rose the stately, old-fashioned mansions of Beacon Street. An east wind was blowing; the air was salt and cool,—as refreshing as a drink of cold water, but obliging the Browns to put on thick wraps and shawls that had not been used for months in Cincinnati.

"Unfortunately," said Stanford, "every one in Boston does not live on Beacon Street, nor does the east wind always blow here. When it does not, Boston is as warm and disagreeable as any other city in summer-time. I think it's time, mother, we were going to the cars."

Stanford was only going with them as far as Salem, where he was to join some of his student friends in camping out.

Who can describe the delight and enthusiasm of the Western children, as the train, sweeping on, brought them their first view of the real ocean? Oh, the indescribable fascination of every bit of it, — the intense green of the salt marshes, the projecting points marked with light-houses, the line of white surf breaking against long sand beaches, the boats dancing on the waves, the white sails; above all, the great glorious expanse of water, all alive this morning with choppy, white-capped waves! It was a revelation of new possibilities in life to the children.

"To think, mother," exclaimed Nan, "that all this has always been in the world, and we never saw it before!"

"You may think yourself lucky you 're seeing it now," said Don. "Oh, look, Nan, there are some people going in bathing! See the waves tumble 'em over! I wish I were there too."

They left the cars at Rockport, and clambered into a rickety old omnibus, on whose top they saw again their trunks, racked and battered, but still holding together. The omnibus rattled away with them along a lovely road, sometimes skimming the very edge of the water, sometimes plunging into fragrant pine woods, winding among great mossy rocks larger than houses, coming out on hill-tops whence they had a wide view over the ocean. It was a deep, brilliant blue to-day, with white sails gleaming here and there on its broad expanse. And the air was an exhilarating elixir; breathing it seemed to make one over anew.

They stopped at the Ocean-Wave House to leave some passengers. A crowd of gayly dressed people thronged the piazza, children and nurses were under the trees on every side, and from the parlor came the loud thrumming of a piano.

Nan said, "How gay it is here! I wish we were going to stop here. I am afraid it will be stupid at that farm-house."

"Don't be Lou Kibby-ish, Nan, whatever else you are," said Celia. "I'm thankful we're not going here."

"I am certainly thankful we have n't to dismount, all tired and travel-worn, into such a crowd of lookers-on," said Mrs. Brown.

"What are you talking about, Nan?" said Don. "It's sure to be jolly at that farm-house."

Every one, even Nan, agreed with Don's opinion, when, leaving behind the little village with its queer mixture of fishermen's cottages, seashore villas, and summer hotels, they came at last to a large, old-fashioned, gambrel-roofed farm-house, that had once been white, standing well back from the road on a high point of land projecting into the ocean. One side sloped down to a pretty cove with a sandy beach. where at the first glance they saw bathing-houses and dories; the other ended abruptly in a headland overlooking the ocean, against whose rocky base the waves dashed themselves to white, foamy fragments.

On one side of the house was an old orchard, whose mossy, gnarled, distorted apple-trees promised every facility for climbing and making seats, and back of the house stood a big barn with wide-open door.

"Talk about nice places!" said Don, as the omnibus drew up before this house.

In the doorway stood a stout, comfortable, motherly-looking old lady, shading her eyes with one hand as she peered through her spectacles at the omnibus.

"Well, here you are at last," she said, "safe and sound. I began to worry some about you, when you did n't come in the other 'bus. I could n't think what had happened to you. 'Pollos, — he 's my husband, you know, — he 's one o' the easy-goin' sort; he said, 'Now, mother, what's the use of tewin' and worryin'? They'll turn up all right, see if they don't.' But I could n't help feeling consarned about you. I 'm awful glad to see you. Walk right in, and make yourselves to home."

"What a nice lot of children!" added the old lady, as she ushered the Brown troop into the square parlor, with its low ceiling and windows looking out on the ocean, its white wooden mantel decorated with shells and dried grasses, its clean, old-fashioned smell, all seeming so quaint and novel and perfectly delightful to the city children.

A wood fire blazed in the little black iron fireplace with its brass andirons.

"I thought like's not you'd feel a little mite chilly when you first come. A good many folks do. So I had a little fire. Dinner'll be ready by the time you're washed up."

The children hardly needed this announcement, their noses having detected a delicious odor of broiled fish, which sharpened the appetites already keen from breathing salt air all the morning.

A few weeks later, the same omnibus brought Dr. Brown to the farm-house. Such a hale, hearty, sun-browned group of youngsters as were perched on the stone-wall, eager to see who should first pounce upon him! Blue-flannel suits and thick shoes already showed signs of a fatal intimacy with the rocks of the Point.

Baby's puny little white face had rounded out to a brown, hard plumpness, and the roses of Cape Ann bloomed anew in the pink of her cheeks. She pulled papa sturdily along towards the house, with a tanned, strong little hand.

"Papa tum see pitty water. Papa climb trees," she said.

"Why, Baby Brown, you 're as strong as a little Shetland pony," exclaimed papa, pretending to be quite helpless in Baby's grasp.

"Yes, and as wild too," said Mrs. Brown, who wore a broad shade-hat tied down under her chin, and stepped off with vigor, as if she could walk a mile or two, as indeed she could. "Did you ever see a child change so much in so short a time? Mrs. Babson insists it is quite as much owing to drinking 'real milk,' as to the sea air. But it seems to me *you* are not looking at all well."

"Papa looks so pale!" said Nan.

"I confess I 'm a little tired by the heat and my journey; and I look pale to you, because you are all so brown that you have forgotten the color of civilized people. However, I believe in an occasional return to semi-barbarism. Good fishing here, Don?"

"Good! I should think so. You can fish off the rocks, or go out in a dory. But *the* thing is deep-sea fishing. I had the biggest fun I ever had in my life, day before yesterday. Liph Dunnell — he's one of the fishermen here — let me go out with him in his smack. We went out six miles, way beyond the Minnows, and we caught a wheelbarrow load of codfish! You ought to have seen them. Why, one of them — "

"When Don once gets started on fishing, there's no end to it," interrupted Celia, who was impatient for her chance at father. "I hope you will botanize some with me, father. The flora here is really wonderful. I come upon some new thing every day. I paint from Nature all I can, to carry the flowers and vines home that way; but I don't paint half I ought or want to, there's so much else to do."

"I hope you'll take us out rowing often, papa," said Nan.

"You'd best hire a boat by the week," advised Don. "You can get one for a dollar or so."

"Yes, I want to practise rowing more, now you have come," said Celia.

"Won't you teach me to swim, papa?" asked Nan.

"You'll go out deep-sea fishing, won't you, father?" asked Don.

"No, papa hunt eggs with Baby," said the little one.

"Give me time, give me time, children," said their father, laughing at their eager plans. "Just now my leading interest is supper."

Here the supper bell rang, and Mrs. Babson appeared, her smiling face and cordial greeting showing how heartily she already entered into all the joys of the Brown family.

"If you're hungry, papa," said Celia, "you'll be able to appreciate the broiled perch and baked potatoes. We never can eat enough. Don, especially, is like a bottomless abyss."

"Mrs. Babson's chowder is so delicious," said Nan.

"And her huckleberry cakes—oh, my!" exclaimed Don, who failed to find language equal to the subject.

After supper, Celia said, "Do you feel too tired to walk over to Sunset Rock, papa, to-night?"

"It's only half a mile or so," said Mrs. Brown, "and we go there regularly every pleasant evening, to see the sunset."

"And what becomes of Baby?"

"Oh, she goes too. We take turns carrying her, part of the way, and she seems to enjoy it all as much as any of us."

"Well," said the Doctor, "I 'll try to keep up with you athletes. But you must favor me all you can. Remember I 'm a new-comer, — a mere effete white man, as yet."

"We 'll walk slow, and you can sit down sometimes on a rock and rest, while we pick blackberries," said Nan, who took papa's affectation of being the delicate invalid of the party in veritable earnest.

Sunset Rock crowned the top of a steep hill over in the pasture. A cow-path, winding among bayberry and sweet-fern bushes, huckleberries, blackberries, sweet-briers, — the whole tangle of wild shrubs and vines that make all Cape Ann fragrant with delicate wild perfume, — brought them across the pasture, through a swamp, up the hill, and, with a little scrambling and pulling, out on the top of a great gray boulder, on whose broad surface they sat down and gazed off at the picture spread out before them, — a picture free to "the poorest comer."

Far away stretched the ocean, to where sea and sky mingled. The dazzling rim of the sun was just sinking behind the hills. As it vanished, the western clouds began to glow, at first faintly; then the radiance grew, deepened, and spread, until the whole sky was glorified. To the west the water caught and flashed back the glory, broken and magnified from every restless wave; but far off to the east, where the lighthouse lamp shone out, night was already coming down, and the ocean looked dark, gloomy, and mysterious.

"It is like Samuel Longfellow's 'Golden Sunset,'" said Celia, repeating, —

"The golden sea its mirror spreads
Beneath the golden skies,
And but a narrow strip between
Of land and shadow lies.

"The sea is but another sky,
The sky a sea as well;
And which is earth, and which the heavens,
The eye can scarcely tell."

And here, on the shore of the broad Atlantic, a thousand miles from home, with the sunset glory on their faces and the cool sea-breeze blowing about them, we will leave the Browns.

"But this is n't the end," says some one. No; there never is an end to the real stories. They go on and on, forever. Only bits, selected here and there from the whole, get into the books. If perchance "The Browns" make friends in the wide world into which we now send them, — friends who desire to know more of them, — other chapters of their story may sometime find their way between book-covers. So our farewell to them shall be rather an "Au revoir" than a "Good-by."

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